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AUTHOR IAN RICHARD HARRIS

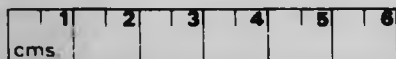
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'MYTH AND REALITY IN THE MOTORCYCLE SUBCULTURE'

IAN RICHARD HARRIS B.A. (hons)

TWO VOLUMES

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"They would ride in city or open country with their mufflers cut out, or in numerous cases absolutely devoid of muffling attachment. In some instances it was the rider's desire for noise, or to bring attention to the fact that he owned a motorcycle; in other instances it was the owner's desire for more power; but whichever the case; this offence in principle and in conjunction with that of unsuitable attire has done more to retard the advancement of motor-cycling in general than all other arguments combined."¹

Alfred H. Bastsch, 'The Rise of the Motorcycle', Harpers Weekly, January, 1909.

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Motorcycle Action Group	National Chopper Club
British Film Institute	British Newspaper Library
London Weekend Television	B.B.C. Radio One
Capital Radio	Faber and Faber
Fifty-Nine Club	U.S. Embassy Information Service
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Last - and far from least - Deborah Davies, who typed and laid out the manuscript in a ridiculously short time without complaint and, as yet, without payment ...

DECLARATION

Part I of this thesis is loosely based on material which first appeared in the book 'Bikers: Birth Of A Modern Day Outlaw', written by myself and published by Faber and Faber Ltd., London and Boston, August 1985.

SUMMARY

Divided into two parts, the thesis seeks to provide a detailed explanation for the emergence and historical development of the outlaw motorcycle subculture as well as the essential structural and ideological focii which underpin the phenomenon in its contemporary form.

Part I charts the progressive expansion from its initial appearance as a specifically distinct form of deviant subculture in Southern California in the latter part of the 1940s to what is today an extremely prolific international, intergenerational and largely interracial mass subculture. Focussing upon the different stages which have characterised the subculture's process of solidification, it examines the series of media-induced moral panics which have periodically elevated it to public prominence and makes intelligible the complex interrelationship between the various disparate contextual strands which have over time coalesced to form that broad strata of motorcycle-borne folk devil ubiquitously and invariably erroneously described as 'Hells Angels'.

Part II cuts through the heavily myth-laden skin of the contemporary outlaw motorcycle subculture as it exists in its archetypal form throughout the world, exposing the no less rich layers of subcultural activity underneath. Commencing with an analysis of the genesis of and quasi-criminal in-group behaviour common to that highly-ritualised and tightly-knit subcultural formation, the one-percenter outlaw motorcycle club, it examines the symbolic order of meaning which gives substance to the lives of the membership, looks at the collective decision-making processes which ensure internal solidity, and charts the career pattern of a would-be club member from casual 'hangaround' to full blown 1%er.

The remainder of Part II still further separates the myth from the reality by breaking down the very potent barriers of popular imagery which have hitherto so successfully rendered all previous sociological accounts of the outlaw motorcycle subculture absolutely meaningless. It looks at the spheres of politics, race, sex and crime and re-evaluates conventional wisdom on biker attitudes to and involvement in each.

Here come the capybaras on their bikes.
They swerve into the friendly, leafy square
Knocking the anzwantibos off their trikes,
Giving the old-age coypus a bad scare.
They specialise in nasty, lightning strikes.
They leave the banks and the grocers' shops quite bare.
They swagger through the bar doors for a shot
Of anything the barman hasn't got.

They spoil the friendly rodent rodeos
By rustling the grazing flocks of mice.
They wear enormous jackboots on their toes.
Insulted by a comment, in a trice
They whip their switchblades out beneath your nose.
Their favourite food is elephant and rice.
Their personal appearance is revolting.
Their fur is never brushed and always moulting.

And in the evening when the sun goes down
They take the comely women in their backs
And ride for several furlongs out of town
Along the muddy roads and mountain tracks,
Wearing a grim and terrifying frown.
Months later all the females have attacks
And call the coypu doctors to their beds.
What's born has dreadful capybara heads.²

James Fenton, THE WILD ONES.

INTRODUCTION: "NOW AND AGAIN PEOPLE GIVE US A HARD TIME ..."

"You see things ... on a motorcycle in a way that is completely different from any other. In a car you're always in a compartment, and because you're used to it you don't realise that through that car window everything you see is just more T.V. ... You're a passive observer and it is all moving by you boringly in a frame.

"On a cycle the frame is gone. You're completely in contact with it all. You're in the scene, not just watching it anymore, and the sense of presence is overwhelming. That concrete whizzing by five inches below your foot is the real thing, the same stuff you walk on, it's right there, so blurred you can't focus on it, yet you can put your foot down and touch it anytime, and the whole thing, the whole experience, is never removed from immediate consciousness ...

"... You don't make great conversation on a running cycle. Instead you spend your time being aware of things and meditating on them. On sights and sounds, on the mood of the weather and things remembered, on the machine and the countryside you're in, thinking about things at great leisure and length without being hurried and without feeling you're losing time ..." ³

"Enter seven youths with shotguns.

"Seven menacing youths, dressed to a man in regulation Hell's Angels uniform, each holding a sawn-off shotgun at the ready ...

"They were not alone. Behind them, jostling and pushing in to see the action, were the rest of their chapter mob ...

"'Are you the vicar what leads the Double Zero Angels?' demanded their leader in a deep, rich Black Country voice.

"I shall never forget him. Well over six feet tall (it seemed at least seven at the time) he towered over me. He wore a Nazi helmet with long fair hair straggling from underneath it on to his shoulders. His leather jacket was smothered in studs and on the front were his various badges of office, clearly marking him out as 'top brass'. A three-inch wide studded belt, with quick-release buckle, went round the waist of his filthy blue jeans. Chains hung at each wrist. From the top of one of his leather motorcycling boots a sheath knife protruded conspicuously. He was a walking offensive weapon ...

"'I've come to sort it out with you', he snarled. 'I've done all the other chapter leaders and you ain't getting in my way'."⁴

Two classic images. Two, very different, portrayals of motorcycling as a cultural pursuit. The one fluid, poetic and highly desirable, the other anything but.

The first, penned by a self-confessed 'insider', is undeniably esoteric. Unambiguously addressed to the motorcycling cognoscenti, it seeks to encapsulate in words the supreme essence of freedom and self-estrangement experienced, however fleetingly, by the speeding biker on the open road, and, as such, places itself entirely beyond the comprehension of the uninitiated bystander. The second, in stark contrast, is addressed to the public at large, drawing liberally upon the various quintessential elements - aggression, violence, machismo - which, when taken together, bring to life that timeless folk devil much beloved of the tabloid press, the archetypical outlaw biker.

It would be all too simple to dismiss image two as complete fiction, pure titillation, designed to play upon the media-conditioned fears of the gullible masses. And yet, such images

cannot possibly have been conjured up out of thin air. Every subcultural myth has it's roots in reality, however far removed from that reality it may have become. Likewise, image one, although the view of the insider, does not necessarily tell the whole truth or anything like the truth. The more ardent the devotee, the greater the risk of self-deception.

In the course of this thesis I shall attempt to disentangle the myth from the reality and, in doing so, shed light upon the clusters of meaning which centre upon the motorcycle as a generic commodity and make it's attendant subculture such a rich object of cultural study, no matter what one's attitude to bikes and bikers happens to be.

It is worth passing comment on the dominant mode of presenting the historical development of motorcycling. The vast majority of studies which deal with the subject do so merely as a history of technical progressions, the evolution of particular models, the rise (and fall) of manufacturers and the struggles of major innovators to achieve their respective ultimates in two-wheeled vehicular design. They expound, often in painstaking detail, the general national histories of certain celebrated marques, or deal exclusively in the matter of records, facts and feats - the oldest, the fastest, the most enduring, the biggest, the rarest, etc., etc. - achieved in the course of specific forms of motorcycle sport. Seldom, if ever, except in the case of acknowledged 'heroes' of the racing track, is there any mention made of the human element of motorcycling. It is almost as if the machines concerned built and operated themselves, ceasing to be of any importance, except in terms of incoming revenue, the very moment that they leave the factory gates for the dealers' showrooms and subsequent obscurity.

The dominant historical mode in which motorcycling is presented to the public is therefore as a celebration of technology in mechanical and aesthetic terms. The motorcycle as a commodity, in terms of the way it represents, mediates and reproduces certain cultural and economic values is nowhere to be found. The complexity of the relationship between object and user and, more concretely, user and user, on the one hand, and user and the wider society, on the other, does not appear worthy of serious discussion, except in the most cursory fashion. In fact, the motorcycle rider is glaringly conspicuous by his absence. Nevertheless, it remains patently obvious to even the most casual observer of the popular media that, during the past three decades, an inordinate amount of newsprint, radio, television and film footage has been devoted to the activities of these apparently non-existent motorcyclists. Terms such as Hells Angels, gang bang, chicken run, ton-up and burn-up have taken their place in common parlance, and everybody at least thinks that they know what goes on inside the phenomenon referred to as the outlaw motorcycle subculture. The myths are many, but the facts are few. This is not in itself surprising, as far from attracting interest from researchers, such 'closed' subcultural groups often remain a subject of mystery and casual speculation. Problems of access can be extraordinarily difficult barriers to overcome and, once gained, can present very real sorts of 'occupational hazards' to the unwary or unwelcome researcher. Involvement with quasi-criminal groups and quasi-criminal group activities necessarily poses questions of value judgement which many of us would rather avoid, so we stand on the sidelines along with the rest of the casual observers, waiting to be invited 'in', which of course never happens. We stick to what we regard as being 'safe' and remain blissfully ignorant of how

the 'deviant' group perceives both it's and our world. We know what we know, and what we know is considered sufficient. It is my contention that we know nothing worth knowing about these groups and in my own small way I would like to try and put matters right. I can do no better than to quote the words of that well respected sociologist A.K. Cohen, who maintains that:

"(It) would be desirable to continue and expand research on different groups as social systems, that is, research whose subject is the structure, the process, the history and the sub-culture of the group as such rather than the delinquent individual ... Needless to say, this type of research is fraught with great difficulty. Our technique for the study of small groups in action are crude and the problems of 'getting close' to live delinquent groups and observing them at first hand are enormous. On the other hand, no type of research is of potentially greater value for throwing new light on delinquency and the challenge is worth all the ingenuity we can muster."⁵

When looking at the relation between culture and the motorcycle commodity form, it is of fundamental importance to identify the influence of mediations of motorcycles and motorcycle subcultures across a variety of cultural and economic boundaries. What this establishes is that we are not simply dealing with the relation between motorcycle and motorcyclists, but with a far broader band of social relations. For instance, the ownership of a bike, even a big, well cared for and well presented machine, does not automatically imply membership of the biker subculture. Admission to such a group requires conformity to a certain set of internally mediated social norms, in order to signify nonconformity to 'straight society'. These range across styles of language, dress, behaviour and cultural values as posited in certain kinds

of bikes, notably the 'chopper' or radically customised motorcycle much beloved of the outlaw subculture. To become a member also means moving into association with an established fraternity, generally a previously established motorcycle club, both as part of a local network, and also within a quite clearly defined national/international subculture. Social interaction then takes place, directly, via club activities such as formal parties and runs and through attendance at custom shows, rallies, bikers' rights protests and similar events, and indirectly, via biker magazines specifically geared to the continued protection of the 'biker lifestyle'. Magazines such as Easyriders, Iron Horse, Outlaw Biker, Supercycle and Biker Lifestyle in the United States, Back Street Heroes in Great Britain, Bikers News in Germany, Oz Bike in Australia and Hog Magazine in Scandinavia, have little to do with the world of the straight motorcyclist who uses his machine merely as a form of transport, or the off-road sporting motorcyclist. In fact, they appear to have little to do with motorcycles per se, but instead function as mediums of expression and opinion which self-consciously address the outlaw, or aspirant outlaw motorcyclist, clearly defining the parameters of style appropriate to this group.

In the course of this thesis it will (hopefully) become apparent that the historical influence of the biker subculture transcends both the motorcycling fraternity in general and a particular historical moment. It's influence has extended into the commodity spheres of fashion, music and leisure, as well as the specifically motorcycle linked industries of bike clothing and accessories. What must be made clear is that we are not dealing solely in a one-way traffic. In the capitalist market, commodity forms are culled from the subculture, as well as being presented to it as available products. Conditions of this relation

are not passive however, they manifest continual contestation and resistance.

The motorcycle subculture is of course subject to modification and graduated differences. There are significant gulfs between, say, a Hells Angel chapter, on the one hand, and a weekend rally club, on the other. They exist in different cultures, with well defined boundaries, understood and rarely crossed by either party. However, what they do share is the bike itself, which occupies the key position as the cultural symbol and matrix of their respective cultures, in which it is used to both generate and order meaning. It's material power is, in each case, a felt, and very real, force in the hands of the often economically, politically or culturally powerless participants. Subcultural members represent their symbolic order through their behaviour, appearance and machinery. To the 'outsider', they may 'look' much the same, but to the participants involved, different forms of symbolic order are clearly recognisable as being appropriate to different groups. At times, aspects of this symbolic ordering become highly stylised, as in the case of customising. Customising, or the radical alteration of factory produced motorcycles, can not only be understood in terms of personalisation, but also indicates a generic dissociation of the commodity from its standard form - to represent something other than the manufacturer's, or indeed society's, preferred meaning. It becomes the icon, for the biker, of the expressive individualism and collective identity of their resistance to the pacification of either their class, economic or cultural location. Working class lads denied access to a whole range of other cultural options (due perhaps to unemployment, poor education, or lack of material facilities) are in fact making and claiming a culture of their own, to which the rich and power-

ful can be excluded if so desired.

Indeed, there are those, among them punk entrepreneur and spokesperson Vivienne Westwood, who maintain that the British rockers were the only post-war youth subculture to have successfully generated and sustained a style of their own - a fashion for the street which owes its existence to nobody outside its own tightly drawn lines of acceptability, quite unlike say the mod or punk styles which, virtually as soon as they hit the highstreets, found favour within the ranks of the middle class radical chic. Likewise the customised motorcycle as an artform has remained firmly in the grasp of its subcultural creators, owing nothing to external commercial enterprise, whose designers have been obliged, largely unsuccessfully, to trail along behind.

The fact that such an important and interesting subculture has received little or no serious scrutiny under the sociological microscope is strange indeed and something which I am at pains to explain. I can only conclude that the habitués of the cosy academic world of red shoes and duffle coats have, for reasons of social nicety, eschewed involvement with the boots and leathers oily life of the bike rider. I must admit that I still have problems the other way around...

My own involvement with bikes and bikers goes back a long way. As a small boy I'd hang around the local motorcycle shop clutching my 'I Spy Motorcycles', eagerly noting down the various makes and models, asking silly questions of their owners, and breathing in the heady atmosphere of leather, chrome, oil and noise. So I guess that I can truthfully lay claim to have been 'doing research' on the motorcycle subculture for over three decades. In my wallet I still carry a dog-eared photograph of

of myself, aged two and a half, astride my uncle's 650 c.c. B.S.A. with my father sat stoically on the pillion seat whilst I happily twisted the throttle, presumably imagining my juvenile self belting off down the road. Even now, thirty years on, I still get that very same sense of exhilaration simply sitting on a bike - a feeling that, despite all my rigorous sociological research into the phenomenon, I somehow can't manage to dispel, or even begin to understand. Hopefully, I never will ...

I bought my first bike two weeks before my sixteenth birthday for the princely sum of seven pounds. It was a single cylinder 500 c.c. Ariel, old and much neglected, but nevertheless in my eyes, without a shred of doubt, the most beautiful thing I'd ever seen. A builder friend of my father's brought it home on the back of his lorry, whilst at the same time lecturing me on the folly of parting with good money for 'one of them death traps'. He heaved it down off the tailboard and propped it against the garden wall, as the stand had somehow become detached in transit. The petrol tank promptly dropped to the ground with a sickening clang, putting a large dent in it and depositing its contents all over the path. But worse was yet to come. Hardly had I crossed the threshold before the arguments began.

It must be borne in mind that the year in question was 1965, and 1965 being the height of the mods and rockers crusades on the beaches of the nation, meant that anybody young ('old fogeys' with double-adult sidecar outfits were of course excluded) who expressed the remotest desire to own a motorcycle was generally considered to be, if not exactly a delinquent psychopath, at the very least some sort of social misfit in need of guidance. My own parents, in common with other Daily Mirror reading parents throughout the land, felt that motorcycles, apart from being dirty

and dangerous, represented a short cut to the magistrates' court. Upon reflection, I suppose they may well have had a point, riding bikes has got me into more than a few scrapes over the years. I've got wet on them, cold on them, wet and cold on them, pushed them for miles, cursed and sworn at them, bruised my knuckles on them. Been in constant debt because of them, fell off them more times than I care to remember, and been arrested on them. I have however also derived unimaginable pleasure from riding them, made many close friends through their ownership, and seen sights and experienced sensations that I would never have done if I taken my father's advice, waited the extra year, and bought a car instead.

Being a South London rocker in the 1960s was, I recall, an exciting business - at least, it seemed exciting to me at the time. Skiving off work to spend the day strutting around in groups, resplendent in chrome studded leather jacket, greasy skin-tight jeans and cherry red steel toe-capped boots, life suddenly took on a whole new meaning. There was a sense of adventure in the air, a feeling of togetherness which went some way to dispel the doom and gloom of the dead end world of home and work. I still remember how I felt at the time, I ate, slept and dreamed motorcycles as before, only now I was somehow different, something special. I was 'one of the boys', a rocker, and a force to be reckoned with. We were definitely THE BUSINESS, and we made damned sure that everybody knew it. Not for us the dubiously effeminate world of the mods with their soul music, discotheques, mohair suits and pills. We didn't need artificial stimulants. We could get all the adrenalin rush we needed just by riding our bikes and blowing their 'hair-dryers' into the weeds at the same time. The Daily Mirror said that we were doomed to disappear. Boys were getting smarter, they said; cleaning up their act, they said; getting

all the girls, they said. But we knew better. We didn't care what the 'experts' thought, we just got on with being us.

One balmy Saturday evening in the autumn of 1968, a group of us rode over to the Odeon cinema in Eltham (now a bingo hall) to take a look at Brando in *The Wild One*, the film that had been our sole topic of conversation for weeks past. Pulling up outside, we were confronted by the sight of crowds of fellow rockers standing patiently in a queue, waiting to get in to see the movie which, for the past eleven years, had been kept from them by their moral guardians on the British Board of Film Censors who feared that it might somehow inflame teenage passions to violence. The professional critics of Fleet Street might well have found the whole thing a badly acted yawn, but we knew different - *The Wild One* was our film. For us it was the most fantastic graphic representation of our lifestyle that we'd ever laid eyes on. I don't think that it stirred any of us to feelings of violence. What it did do was to render us a peculiar kind of legitimacy. Hollywood was making films about us. There was a feeling of smug satisfaction to be gained from the knowledge that our heroes had at last vanquished the heroes of our parents' generation. And our heroes didn't wear dinner jackets and ties, they wore leather jackets and jeans, just like us. The story line wasn't important, none of us really wanted to take over towns, but we did want recognition, and that was what Brando had given us. And afterwards, roaring home through the darkened suburbs, we were all Brando. We felt like bloody kings.

That night, for the very first time, I realised that the motorcycle subculture (though hardly a term I would have used in those days) extended far beyond the bounds of my immediate neighbourhood. It had both a history and a future, and I was part of it. Of course, it has changed over the years, and I have

changed with it, and yet it remains every bit as exciting to me today as it was then. When it came to the point in my university career when I was forced to consider whether or not I should get my academic finger out and apply for a grant to do a Ph.D. there was really never any question as to what the topic of study would be. In my opinion, sociologists have never treated the motorcycle subculture with the degree of seriousness which, given it's extraordinary longevity, conspicuity and geographical ubiquity, it surely merits. I have been exceedingly fortunate in that before arriving at university I had established strong and important contacts in almost every area of the motorcycling world, and these I drew on extensively during my period of research. These contacts included members of the Hells Angels and other outlaw motorcycle clubs, without whom the research would have been rendered highly problematic, not to say virtually impossible. Nevertheless, there were times when I had cause to wholeheartedly regret my choice of topic. In common with any tight-knit quasi-criminal subcultural group, outlaw bikers have a healthy suspicion of anybody, known to them or not, seeking to record details of their lives. Many, not surprisingly, simply failed to see the point of the exercise, and proved uncooperative. On occasions, I encountered outright hostility, and was verbally and physically threatened, but in the main the participants were keen to talk and put 'their side of the story'. Understandably, I have been obliged to change names and locations where questions of criminality are involved, or where requested to do so by particular individuals for reasons best known to themselves. Without according such guarantees of anonymity, I could never have hoped to obtain the information I did. But I have to say that, apart from the tedious process of actually writing up the thesis, I thoroughly enjoyed my excursion into the field. Whilst I have tried to maintain acceptable sociological standards of value freedom and objectivity, it will

become apparent to the reader precisely where my sympathies lie. To accusations of bias I have to plead guilty. My partiality was, and still is, towards the bikers, and probably always will be.

Even today, the majority of people that I come into contact with seem to regard me as something strange and threatening, in spite of the fact that I've got a university degree under my belt and do research for the Economic and Social Research Council. They just cannot understand why it is that I still ride a motorcycle and dress the way I do. I get refused service in public houses and find it virtually impossible to obtain rented accommodation. I get stopped and searched by the police with monotonous regularity, and I have some difficulty convincing strangers that I'm not about to commit grievous bodily harm on their person. Brendan, one of the group of Hells Angels which feature in my research, is fond of telling me, with fatalistic resignation, that 'it's the price you pay for the life you lead', and therefore it should be borne with dignity, if not exactly relished. I'm not so sure, but I do know that having had the immense good fortune to have been involved in the world of motorcycling for the past twenty years, I am more than willing to put up with the stigma if it means that I am able to carry on living the life that I love.

In the course of this thesis I intend to shed light upon the motorcycle or 'biker' subculture as it has developed during the post-war period. Whilst I shall endeavour to provide a full account of the various different strands which go to make up this subculture, explain their contextual relationship both historically and contemporarily, and look at the 'career' patterns of members and group decision making processes in as wide a context as

possible. my primary intention is to focus in particular upon the emergence, development and internal organisational structures of the hardcore, quasi-criminal outlaw motorcycle club, in particular the Hells Angels, who first appeared as a specifically distinct form of deviant subculture on the west coast of the United States in the late 1940s and have since spread throughout North America and indeed the entire industrialised world, including several Eastern Bloc countries, in a way quite unlike any seemingly comparable deviant subcultures.

I have set out to show that the outlaw biker subculture defies conceptualisation as a delinquent youth subculture, as many sociologists appear to believe it to be, which are by definition transient and classbound social forms organised around a particular 'flavour of the year' pattern of commodity consumption - music, fashion, etc. - such as mods, rockers, punks, hippies, skinheads, et al, groups whose membership, with the onset of marriage and/or employment, are reassimilated into the parent class culture. Neither can the outlaw biker subculture be conceptualised in the same way as the 'violent gang' (n.b. Yablonsky 1962) which arises out of specifically localised conditions, and whose further development is both controlled and constrained by such conditions, although it must be stated that the forms of in-group behaviour exhibited by the participants do bear a marked similarity. Furthermore, this subculture cannot be classified as a specifically criminal subculture whose membership and organisational structure is geared primarily to the pursuit of criminal rather than socio-cultural goals, although again some have compared hardcore motorcycle clubs in the U.S.A. with Mafia-type crime families. That is not to say however that there is an absence of criminal activity, on the contrary many outlaw motorcycle club members come into regular and often serious

contact with the police and courts. Nevertheless, there is no recognisable organised criminal activity involving such clubs as a whole, in spite of repeated attempts by law enforcement agencies of many countries to prove otherwise.

The motorcycle subculture is in fact a truly intergenerational phenomenon, attracting recruits well beyond the age of 'normal' subcultural involvement, many maintaining an active participatory role for twenty years or more before 'retiring'. It also, as we shall see, embraces participants from widely varying socio-cultural backgrounds, male and female, black and white, spanning national boundaries and bridging deeply ingrained religious and racial divides. The vast majority of outlaw motorcycle club recruits are over the age of twenty-five, usually employed, and often married with families and yet, strangely enough, participation in subcultural activities appears not to be significantly affected by such responsibilities.

For a subculture which is so pervasive, long lasting and in receipt of continual media attention, remarkably few serious attempts have been made to analyse it in anything but the most shallow or fragmented fashion. There appeared during the 1960s a handful of journalistic accounts purporting to comment at first hand upon the lifestyle of outlaw motorcycle club members. Some, notably Hunter S. Thompson's book *Hell's Angels*, were reasonably accurate and well informed, the majority however were anything but accurate, relying for their sources of information upon largely fictitious and highly sensationalised newspaper reports and Federal Bureau of Investigation misinformation. Coupled with these, a whole host of eminently forgettable Hollywood films and lurid novels have claimed to portray the outlaw way of life, while at the same time using the subject matter as a heaven sent

opportunity to titillate their audiences with scenes of sex and savagery calculated to reap large profits at the box office, whilst at the same time creating a whole series of widespread myths about just what it is that bikers do get up to in the privacy of their own clubhouses. These myths have so taken root in popular culture that today there are very few people in the Western world who aren't only too well aware that these sordid, depraved, urine-stained specimens of humanity would, if they were not kept at bay, rape, mutilate and otherwise despoil anybody unfortunate enough to get in their way. I intend to explode these media-created myths and, hopefully, get to the bottom of what the mechanised Twentieth Century outlaw is really all about. I say hopefully because I'm not at all sure that I've succeeded, but then I guess that's your job to decide for me. Anyway, what the hell, I hope it makes good reading ...

I was to learn (the hard way) quite early on in my research that being an outlaw biker can be a decidedly dodgy business. Around 3 p.m. one rainy summer's day I was making my way on foot along the Earls Court Road clutching armfuls of camping gear that had until recently been tied to the back of my now defunct motorcycle. As I neared the tube station I was jumped on heavily and without warning by two burly characters dressed like football fans, who threw me against a handy wall and informed me that I'd been 'captured' by the Regional Crime Squad. After the usual shakedown and Sweeny type repartee, I was transported unceremoniously on the floor of a police van for a fingerprinting and photography session down at the local nick.

Five long, fun-filled hours later I was sent back into the rain with a charge sheet relating to the possession of my camping knife (offensive weapon) and bike tools (house-breaking implements), having been bailed to appear at West London Magis-

trates Court. My explanation, which to me sounded eminently plausible, as to how I came to be in the Earls Court Road on that particular afternoon carrying all that obviously suspicious equipment fell, not unexpectedly, on deaf ears. They were, so they informed me, doing the public a 'favour' by having a 'good crack-down on street crime', and as I resembled, in their eyes, a suitable candidate for a spot of G.B.H./burglary (I was wearing a waterproof P.V.C. motorcycle suit and carrying a tent, sleeping bag, crash helmet and gloves), I had been quite rightly apprehended. It transpired that they regarded bikers, along with 'blacks, paddies and drunken Scotsmen' as a likely public menace which they felt duty bound to stamp on.

Several months passed and one morning I received copies of the police statements. Supposedly independent accounts written down 'at or soon after the time of arrest' they were, to say the least, curious. I don't know exactly what the Metropolitan Police Book of Verbals contains by way of select phrases attributable to bikers, but I'm certain it would make interesting reading. The constabulary may well have moved on some way from the use of much loved phrases like 'It's a fair cop guv, you got me bang to rights ...' but not I fear very far. I suppose that there are people out there who when arrested might just conceivably utter the immortal words,

"Ch leave it out, can't you see I'm a biker, now and again people give us a hard time. I'm basically peaceful, but if I do have a punch up I can't let the side down, I have to carry a blade it goes with the gear."

To which an on the ball policeman could reply,

"So basically what you're saying is that if a load of blokes had a go at you, you would use the blade to defend yourself."

And again, this mythical 'biker in the street' might get into the game and respond with,

"Yeah I'm at college but I love the bike life and that's part of it ..."

But somehow I have my doubts.

At the ensuing trial held at Knightsbridge Crown Court, (an unappealing Victorian heap just around the corner from Harrods), even the learned judge had a hard time believing that such neatly incriminating words might have emanated from my lips. And when prosecuting counsel rose to his feet, leered at the public gallery and made stabbing motions with my knife, he dismissed the jury and admonished the officers concerned for bringing a man of my 'professional standing' to court on such a charge. By now I was getting excited. Visions of my triumphant exit from the dock having been duly pronounced not guilty flashed through my mind. Unfortunately, things weren't that simple. The jury filed back and his lordship informed me that owing to the introduction of 'extraordinary new evidence', namely my being a university graduate doing research in the area concerned, he intended to call a halt to the proceedings and instead bind me over for a year to keep the Queen's peace.

For my part not a totally happy result, but nevertheless, an interesting example of how the law in all its wisdom sees fit to differentiate between its treatment of scruffy yobbos who ride bikes and scruffy yobbos who ride bikes and do Ph.D's ...

PART ONE

THE MAKING OF THE
MOTORCYCLE SUBCULTURE

CHAPTER I : THE STORY UNFOLDS

"There is no denying it, the bandit is brave, both in action and as victim. He dies defiantly and well, and unnumbered boys from slums and suburbs, who possess nothing but the common but nevertheless precious gift of strength and courage, can identify themselves with him. In a society in which men live by subservience, as ancillaries to machinery, the bandit lives and dies with a straight¹ back."

"Hell's Angels make punks, mods and skinheads look like a bunch of choirboys,' said one of the few Welsh policemen to have first-hand experience of the motorcycle-borne gangs whose wild exploits make headline news.

"Wales already has several motorcycle groups but these are dismissed as a 'load of yobs and kids pretending to be something they've read about, and to call them Hell's Angels would be a dubious compliment to which they are not entitled.'

"These groups according to a (police) spokesman pose no big problem (to law and order). 'We know them, we know their parents', he said. 'Most of them work and change into their biking gear when they clock off. If they go looking for trouble, they find we are there to stop them.

"'A real Hell's Angels chapter would require different² tactics - they can be vicious'"

'The Western Mail' reporting on 'The Lawless Cult that came from the States', in the wake of a 1980 Cardiff rape

trial involving several members of the then 'unofficial' Windsor chapter of the Hells Angels. During the course of the trial, in which three of the five defendants were convicted and imprisoned, the seriousness of the incident escalated rapidly from a straightforward crime, ably handled by the Cardiff police, into a wholesale threat to law and order throughout the entire Principality. The police and the media loudly disassociated their own home grown "yobs and kids", whose actions and motives were fully understandable, from the alien invaders, whose behaviour was as inexplicable as it was irrational. It was as if they needed to remind the good folks of South Wales of the terrifying consequences of lawlessness and imorality by conjouring up an abnormal 'barbarian other' which threatened their existence, and in doing so, firmly establish themselves as fitting guardians of the public peace. In fact, the Cardiff area has for many years boasted the highest crime rate in Wales and, indeed, one of the highest in the whole of the United Kingdom. Incidents of violence and sexual attacks, if not exactly commonplace, are hardly rare enough occurrences to warrant the kind of blanket press coverage surrounding this particular crime. What, then, was the extraordinary ingredient which engendered such hysteria? What kind of people were these 'folk devils' who could instill fear into the hearts of the police and press of a nation? What is the reality behind the myth of the outlaw motorcycle subculture? Who are the real outlaw bikers?

The first myth that needs to be dispelled is that the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is wholly representative of

the entire motorcycle subculture. Numerous films, novels, press and police reports and 'sociological' studies have claimed to portray the authentic face of the biker as the ragged, unwashed, 'don't give a shit' Hells Angel. But the subculture is much more widespread, encompassing both structurally and historically many recognisably different strands within its ranks. True, the Hells Angels, more than any other body, epitomise the extreme hardcore end of the spectrum, but they are only one group amongst many, probably the most notorious, but certainly not wholly representative either of the outlaw motorcycle club or of outlaw bikers in general.

Unfortunately, the term 'Hells Angel' is ubiquitously used by the media to describe any leather jacketed individual from fourteen to forty, whom the powers that be consider to be potentially antisocial, whether on or off a motorcycle. But, the official Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is very much more exclusive, and probably has fewer than three thousand members worldwide. The club's influence, both within the subculture and outside it, has been wide, but its public image owes more to the lurid fantasies of Hollywood movie moguls than to its own endeavours. It was probably the media image of the archetypical outlaw biker lifestyle during the 1960's that saved them from extinction and turned them into the world's best known bike club. It also led many individual unaligned motorcycle riders in a host of countries to emulate their celluloid heroes and form outlaw clubs known by a variety of names from the sublime to the sheer ridiculous - Galloping Geese, Desperadoes, Outlaws, Heaven's Sinners,

Angels of Death, Flaming Creatures, Huns, Skull Munchers, Renegade Nomads, Sons of Satan, Broad Jumpers, Flying Reptiles etc. etc.

Thus, with the willing help of journalists and script-writers, the name 'Hells Angels' became synonymous with the expansion of a particular form of motorcycle subculture quite unlike any other that had gone before, but which had existed on the West Coast of America in embryonic form since the mid-1940's.

The outlaw motorcycle subculture was born at the end of the Second World War. It grew up in the run-down ghettos of Los Angeles, Oakland, San Francisco, and the many grey urban sprawls strung out along the Pacific coast. California's golden dream didn't reach far into the ghetto. Life there had progressively worsened during the immediate post-war years as thousands of rural workers, sick and tired of trying to scratch a living from hard unyielding land, flocked to the city in search of a piece of America's massive industrial expansion. This migration had been going on since the 1930's, with a steady flow of displaced families giving up the land for the factory, but it was the onset of war and its attendant manufacturing industries that turned this flow into a torrent, the influx swelling the already seething mass of human misery to unbearable proportions. The immigrants constituted a new workforce ripe for ruthless exploitation in backstreet sweat-shops. Shunned by the more experienced and better organised sections of the urban working class, they were forced to live in conditions far worse than those of their share-cropping Okie cousins. Families were split up and traditional ties of mutual support and dependence severed. In this melting pot

of humanity, each man competed against his neighbour to earn a living and better himself. As the manufacturing boom of the war years passed, jobs disappeared rapidly, and the relative prosperity enjoyed by the immigrant workforce disappeared also. It was a culture of poverty, of urban hillbillies who, having escaped from the dustbowl, found themselves caught up in the midst of a new nightmare. Their backwoods culture completely unfitted them for urban life, it failed to provide them with the necessary skills to survive in this cut-throat world. When they could get work they were given the dirtiest and most menial factory jobs, it was only their pride that sustained them. Michael Harrington recalls the living conditions:

"(We) lived in one of the worst urban slums for white people that I have ever seen ... in Oakland, California ... one (could) walk into a bar a few miles from the Pacific Ocean and be transported into the hills or the dustbowl of Oklahoma.. The atmosphere (was) not picturesque however; it (was) tough, incipient with violence, and there (was) brawling and prostitution ...

"These people were for the most part Arkansas sharecroppers and cotton pickers ... Some of the houses had probably been the homes of aristocrats of an earlier day. There were slim windows, archways, courtyards. But this architectural charm was vestigial. The houses had been cut into rooms, and the families were packed into them. For the most part, there were no bathrooms working inside these places. There were some outhouses in the backyard, and sometimes the common pump was there, too. Then the place became a quagmire. Sometimes the

way to the outhouse led through somebody's room. (That occurred, I suppose, when what was formerly a kitchen was converted into an 'apartment'). When that happened, people would be passing through all night long ...

"These are ... the conditions under which the country folk live, and suffer, in the cities of the other America."³

In a land where 'any man could become president', the ideology of the ghetto was: work hard, keep your mouth shut, and hope that prosperity is just around the corner. This first generation of poor white sium-dwellers were, unlike their much more experienced and better culturally adapted Negro and Mexican counterparts, ill equipped to meet the challenge. They had yet to realise that there was no room for the sober, decent, individualistic human being in this cut-throat world. The parents were anxious to maintain a sense of decency and clung to the tried and trusted virtues of their rural forefathers. Not so their offspring who, born and raised in the ghetto, quickly learned to adopt the methods of defence and resistance common to their black contemporaries, and to spurn the lifestyle and dreams of their elders. The traditional values of life in small-town Alabama or Missouri were as alien to them as little green men from Mars. They wanted no part of it and resorted instead to alternative ways of 'getting by' and 'getting on'. They fully realised the hopelessness of the situation in which they found themselves, and understood only too well the gulf between their parents' aspirations and material reality.

"We lived on the edge of the coloured section of the city (Oakland). My father had a job in a warehouse and my

mother took in ironing. I watched them work harder and harder while we grew poorer and poorer. If it hadn't been for my ability to sneak into an occasional movie I would have grown up believing that everyone lived more or less the way we did. We lived in a two-room apartment that always stunk of dirty laundry and was overrun with filthy roaches that only the landlord had trouble seeing ...

"There were some guys on my block who had come out West with their families about the same time I did. They came to California to avoid starving, only to discover that you can starve in more ways than one ... My folks starved to death; but it wasn't because they didn't have enough to eat. My friends and I would have starved just the same way our folks did if we had to go on living the way people seemed to expect us to live. Your'e supposed to grow up quietly and get a stinking, petty job and spend the rest of your life drinking beer in front of the T.V., learning how to go on working and consuming and voting for the right thief."

It was the cagey street-wise hustler, the black 'dream seller' who lived fast and well, or Brando's cool waterfront gang leader who became their heroes and teachers, not the fiery bible-thumping preacher or the Cadillac-borne Wall Street corporation man. Machismo and cunning were the names of the game, not hard work and decency - the rules were already drawn up and the dice were heavily loaded against them. If the game was to be won, it had to be played the right way, not the way The Man wanted it played ...

"The Haves ran the world, dictating moral codes and standards of living that any decent self-respecting citizen

had to live up to in order to be something other than 'trash'. Then, while the Have-Nots worked their guts out to maintain that minimum standard, trying in their own pathetic, dumb way to live up to moral codes etc., the people who made those codes broke every rule in the book behind the privacy of their locked penthouses and middle-class doors. You couldn't expect them to give anything away. Why should they? And you couldn't blame the Have-Nots for being too ignorant to see through the game. You couldn't put them down because they were simple and innocent. No, that's just the way the world went round. You either go along or drop out of the race."⁵

What was to emerge as one form of 'solution' to the problems faced by these disaffected first-generation white ghetto-dwellers was the arrival on the scene of what was probably the first national post-war 'delinquent' subculture - the world of the outlaw biker. Here was a way of life distinct and different from both the black culture of the ghetto and the parent culture. It was a way of life which owed nothing to the straight world of Middle America, and yet it transcended the tenement blocks and warehouses of downtown Oakland.

While the ghettos were bubbling all over the United States, thousands of young G.I.'s were returning home. Having fought for 'freedom' they suddenly found out that the world had moved on since the heady days of 1941. Those that stayed at home had taken their share of the jobs and the girls. Momma's apple pie and square dancing had become more than a little tame for travellers who had ventured beyond the county seat to Europe or South-East Asia. In a world where rock'n'roll had yet to be discovered by Alan Freed, where

Frank Sinatra and Patti Page were the most exciting thing in socially acceptable white music, where James Dean was some years away from being rebel, with or without a cause, and where Errol Flynn still hadn't relinquished his status as 'The Wild One' of the silver screen to Marlon Brando, disaffected white youth of urban America relieved their boredom and frustration by turning to the relatively affordable motorcycle as a means of mobility and excitement.

"Most ghetto residents learn to adjust to a life in chains. Some choose to give up when their bodies start to ache; others fight until the hurt and the pain subdue them; only a few choose to suffer for endless torment for uncertain goals.

"There is little in the ghetto world that offers hope or provides solace. Its walls shut out even the dream of escape. Its chains make a mockery of freedom. Its buildings, its stores, its schools offer nothing of beauty, little of worth."

There were two basic routes of escape from the chains of the ghetto, the culture of poverty, the one passive, inactive and private - drugs. The other, explosive, active and public - bikes. Many gave up hope entirely and settled for the first solution, retreating into the shadows. A minority of more rebellious souls opted for the second, forming the nucleus of a subculture which would eventually spread far beyond the confines of the ghetto.

CHAPTER II : THE OUTLAW COMES TO TOWN

"He wore black denim trousers and motorcycle boots
And a black leather jacket with an eagle on the back
He had a hopped-up 'sickle that took off like a gun
That fool was the terror of Highway 101."⁷

Motorcycle riders got together, hung out in bars, went away for weekends, and occasionally raised a little hell. As time went on, the beginnings of a distinctive biker subculture began to emerge on the streets of the ghetto. Riders affected a similar style of dress in the main, ex-U.S. Airforce leather flying jackets, caps, goggles, and heavy engineer's boots. There was at this time, no question of fashion involved, no style for its own sake. Individuals merely appropriated the most suitable clothing for the job, clothing that was cheap, plentiful, durable and protected the body from the worst of the elements encountered whilst aboard the motorcycle. There was however also a strong attachment amongst the early American bikers, the majority of them being ex-servicemen, to such clothing. They felt estranged, alienated from the society to which they had returned, and sought comradeship amongst those who found themselves in a similar position. The wearing of service gear engendered feelings of group solidarity, recollections of the times when they had been forced to act in unison literally in order to survive. It was an external badge of common identity, it told the other delinquent denizens of the ghetto that they were both different as individuals and that they were strong as a collectivity, and therefore not to be trifled with.

Riders also affected a similar pattern of speech, a cross between the argot of the ghetto, the language of the juvenile youth gangs and pool hustlers, and that which had grown up amongst the G.I.'s during the course of the war. From the first source, the world of the pool hustler, they developed the extensive use of nicknames (sometimes referred to as 'legal names') not, as Polsky points out in 'Hustlers, Beats and Others', primarily to confuse outsiders whilst engaged in criminal or quasi-criminal activities, although as inhabitants of the ghetto they certainly participated in such activities on a regular basis, but more particularly because it engendered feelings of internal solidarity, of 'oneness' amongst the group. As with poolroom hustlers, many acquired their nicknames in adolescence, during their terms of 'apprenticeship' with youth gangs, or in the services, but the majority were given their nicknames upon acceptance to the group. Such nicknames were usually associated with some physical attribute of the individual concerned i.e. Squint, Lanky, Gnome, Ape, Ginger, Limpy or Little Andy (as opposed to another, taller Andy, who would naturally enough come to acquire the nickname Big Andy). Others had nicknames bestowed on them which indicated perceived character traits or personal predilections i.e. Crafty, Tramp, Pinball, Loser, Mouldy Ray, Freewheeling Frank, Charger Charlie The Child Molester, Speed, Alky, Animal or Crazy Charlie. As Polsky points out, in common with hustlers, most outlaw bikers:

"Never use their real names (except occasionally with outsiders ...), not because these need to be hidden but simply because they prefer to be nicknamed. Like many other argot

terms, these nicknames exist because ... 'they lend a little colour to the game'.

"This is to say that the ... nickname is a 'monicker', not an 'alias'. True enough, the monicker ... may incidentally aid him when he is being sought by police, for the latter may be seeking him only under his real name whereas most of his colleagues and friends have never heard that name and know him only by his monicker ... But ... (in) trying to avoid arrest (he) never depends on his monicker for this purpose; on the contrary, when on the lam* and faced with any situation in which he must give his name - e.g. meeting new people, renting a room, buying a plane ticket - he neither uses his real name nor his monicker but temporarily adopts yet another name, a true alias."⁸

Polsky goes on to sum up why it is that in his opinion the poolroom hustlers of his study adopted the extensive use of nicknames with which to address each other within the confines of that particular subculture. In my opinion, this explanation can equally and quite justifiably be applied to outlaw bikers, a group which shares common origins and a common structural situation within the quasi-criminal infrastructure of the inner city ghetto. He says:

"Although the chief reason for ... (the) use of monickers is ... the furtherance of 'esprit de corps', additional factors bolster such use. Taken together, they probably account for the extremely high percentage of hustlers - old and young alike - with monickers. (a) (They) are overwhelmingly from the lower

* on the run from the police

class, which makes more frequent use of nicknames in adulthood than other classes. (b) (Their) world overlaps other criminal circles that have high monicker rates ... (c) (They) are historically minded, and the use of monickers is one way of maintaining a long-standing craft tradition (the old-time hustlers also had monickers). (d) The monickers may also reflect a continuance of certain male-alliance aspects of adolescence. Relevant here is the fact that the poolroom world (like the world of the outlaw biker) ... is exclusively male, except on infrequent occasions." ⁹

In relation to the outlaw biker subculture, point (c) is of great interest. Many biker nicknames dating back to the early formative years are still in use today and have taken an important place in the folklore of the subculture, bestowing upon it, as Polsky suggests, "a long-standing craft tradition". Such nicknames as Sonny, Magoo, Tramp, Animal, Bubbles, Crazy, Pig, Dirty, Charger Charlie, Cowboy and Tank, arise time and time again in the history of the subculture on an international level, as widespread as America and Australia.

Again, as in Polsky's point (d), the nicknames of the outlaw biker subculture predominantly reflect the masculinity of the individuals concerned, although more often than not, the 'qualities' referred to - Crazy, Dirty, Crafty, Alky, Killer, Shooter, Limpy, Ape - certainly do not extoll the ideals of masculinity traditionally valued by the dominant culture. They are nonetheless generally indicative of the sorts of qualities necessary to ensure the individual's survival in the harsh world of the ghetto, and tend to be viewed very much

as terms of respect within the subculture and its surrounding peer group, including other rival quasi-criminal groups.

It is not simply a question of the celebration of working class as opposed to middle class values as Miller (1958)¹⁰ or Cohen (1955)¹¹ identify. It is not a matter of choice at all, but a concrete recognition of the fact that in the culture of the ghetto, a world of poverty and violence, where middle class chivalry and good manners are not merely an undesirable goal, but a total irrelevancy, those who wish to survive and prosper must adopt the appropriate character traits. Both Thompson (1966)¹² and Montgomery (1977)¹³ assert that the giving of nicknames to individuals who possess identifiable character traits tends to set a group seal of approval on those traits and encourages the recipient to accentuate them, but this implies a much greater importance being attached to the nickname itself than is the case. In reality, once having been conferred, there is little or no importance subsequently attached to either the nickname itself or its derivations. Having been applied the nickname is simply a nickname and nothing more sinister than that.

For the police of course, the propensity for outlaw bikers to adopt nicknames is highly indicative of the fact that the individuals concerned 'have something to hide' - i.e. that, being involved in regular criminal activity, they wish to confuse law enforcement agencies as to their true identity and thereby avoid detection or arrest. But, the reality of the situation is precisely the opposite, nicknames tend to draw public and police attention to potential or actual law breakers within the group, making it far more difficult for

the individual concerned to 'go underground'. Many outlaw bikers, including club members, have in fact no nicknames at all, preferring to use their own Christian names. Nicknames are of no significant ritualistic or criminal importance within the subculture. There is absolutely no hard and fast rule governing their application.

Other than the question of nicknames, the argot associated with the outlaw biker subculture, is, apart from specific terms referring to the mechanics of the motorcycles, almost entirely derived from the quasi-criminal street subculture of the period, with extensive additions from the drug subculture of the mid to late sixties. Outlaw bikers, from the early days, in common with other contemporary street subcultures, were apt to draw a strong line of distinction between themselves and the dominant culture, referring to anybody outside the subculture by the derogatory name 'citizen', or more commonly in England 'wally', whilst calling each other 'brother' or 'bro'. A comprehensive glossary of biker terminology past and present can be found in Appendix I.

As time went by and the outlaw motorcycle subculture solidified, riders began to get together and form embryonic clubs, wearing rudimentary insignia, or 'colours', on their backs to denote their particular group affiliations, again, much in the same vein as the juvenile street gangs of the period. This banding together afforded them some measure of protection in the ghetto, where lone 'deviants' were easily picked off by more organised predators. Black, Puerto Rican and Italian street subcultures had been structured in this way for some time, and the bikers, with their high street

visibility, were forced to adopt similar tactics in order to ensure survival. Such clubs were also focal points for social activity, the members establishing a useful medium for the exchange of motorcycle parts and mechanical skills. The clubs organised weekend runs for members, a welcome escape from the confines of the ghetto. As the clubs became more tightly knit and divorced from the world of the ride-to-work 'citizen' motorcyclist, highly structured and highly visible clubs like the Booze Fighters, Galloping Geeses, 13 Rebels, Market Street Commandos, Satan's Daughters, Satan's Sinners, Winos, Mofos, Gy Jokers and PO-BOBS (Pissed-Off Bastards from Bloomington, later in 1948 to become the Berdoo founder chapter of the Hells Angels) came into being, and began to travel a little further afield in search of excitement.

The appearance of a bunch of strange-looking city boys astride noisy motorcycles was profoundly disturbing to small-town farming folk. For generations they had existed in a kind of time-warp; their way of life, values, beliefs and institutions remaining largely untouched by the effects of the industrial revolution and two world wars. Few of them had even visited the urban sprawls of the Western seaboard, let alone made the willing acquaintance of ghetto dwellers. They instinctively distrusted city folk with city ways of doing things. And yet, suddenly, here were some of the scroungiest-looking individuals that they'd ever clapped eyes on, right there in their own main street, laughing and drinking and hollering at each other in a language which bore little or no resemblance to the English taught in the town school

Better keep the children away from those Goddam freaks - no telling what they might do ... And where did they get the money for those big shiny motorsickles? Probably the proceeds of drug peddling, extortion, white slavery, or something even worse. Better lock up your daughters, your wives, your property. You couldn't be sure just what these people were capable of ...

The fact that many of the riders had only recently been released from the service of Uncle Sam, having given their all to defend the very same way of life, values and institutions that the townspeople held dear, was neither here nor there. Freedom meant the right to keep yourself to yourself, not a licence to go around scaring God-fearing folk half to death. No, it was useless trying to talk sense into these boys, they must be denied hospitality or else they would return in greater numbers to wreak even greater havoc in the streets. If you let them get away with it once ...

It was not long before the media and law enforcement agencies recognised a potential source of 'trouble' and decided to rise to the challenge posed to their authority by these un-American 'cycle bums'. Their method for treating the 'problem' was systematic harassment, the result was the ostracisation of the outlaw bikers from the mass of 'law-abiding' motorcyclists and the subsequent emergence of a new American folk devil or folk hero (depending on your point of view or, more particularly, your social situation).

What occurred on a hot summer's day, 4th July 1947, was an event guaranteed to bring this new kind of motorised outlaw

to the attention of the great American public. It was to provoke in moms and dads throughout the land a morbid dread of anyone sporting a leather jacket or driving anything with less than four wheels.

"The concept of the 'motorcycle outlaw' was as uniquely American as jazz. Nothing like them had ever existed. In some ways they appeared to be a kind of half-breed anachronism, a human hangover from the era of the Wild West. Yet in other ways they were as new as television. There was absolutely no precedent, in the years after the Second World War, for large groups of hoodlums on motorcycles, revelling in violence, worshipping mobility and thinking nothing of riding five hundred miles on a weekend ... to whoop it up with other groups of cyclists in some country hamlet entirely unprepared to handle even a few peaceful tourists. Many picturesque, outback villages got their first taste of tourism not from families driving Fords or Chevrolets, but from clusters of boozing¹⁴ 'city boys' on motorcycles."

The bikers had made it to the big time. They had been 'discovered' in the town of Hollister, California, and branded by the national press as the biggest threat to the American way of life since the Japanese took it into their heads to bomb Pearl Harbour. In the next ten years the image they created of wild men on motorcycles was to become the subject of numerous books, films, television programmes, newspaper and magazine articles. It was an image which prompted lawmen and elected officials everywhere to take the view that, if they didn't want their own town overrun by these degenerate hoodlums

they had better clamp down good and hard on any kid who even looked like he might ride a motorcycle.

Thus, the image was positively guaranteed to receive a wider and wider audience. It was eagerly adopted by rebellious white working class kids who had nothing to do, nowhere to go, and no future to look forward to. It became the new American outlaw culture, taking over where Billy the Kid, Wild Bill Hickock and the James gang had left off. The motorcycle became a symbolic release from the deadendedness of everyday life, and a way of recreating a group identity which had come to be abandoned in the course of their city-bound migration.

An Oakland teenager, later to become a Hells Angels member, recalls his reaction to the Hollister 'riot':

"Anything that drove the officials wild made me feel good. The establishment had never done anything for me, and in my youthful anger and taste for rebellion, I saw them as responsible for the hardship and misery of my parents and others like them ...

"I (had) ... the clipping from the San Francisco Chronicle pertaining to the Hollister riot.

"'San Benito Street was littered with thousands of beer bottles and other debris. There was no available estimate of the damage. At the height of the pandemonium the motorcyclists drove their vehicles into bars and restaurants, tossed beer bottles out of upper-floor windows, raced through traffic signals and defied the seven-man police force.'

"The more Rivera told me about his gang and motorcycle outlaws in general, the more I came to idolise their way of life. They were outlaws like Jesse James and Pretty Boy Floyd. They were wild and reckless and they made their own laws ... It wasn't true that crime didn't pay. In fact, the way I saw it, a life of crime and social defiance was the only dignified way of life left open to the true individual. Rivera owned a big Harley resplendent with custom tank, chrome galore, ape-hangers, the whole works. He was so cool all the chicks in the neighbourhood wanted him ... And why not? He was a hero. A man on his own feet with a snarl on his face and nothing but contempt for the world at large. In short, a true outlaw."

What happened on that summer's day nearly forty years ago was not in fact planned rioting by a mob who went there bent on creating chaos. Nor did the events that took place achieve anything like the magnitude with which subsequent reports, both official and unofficial, credited them. That is not to say that the good people of that sleepy California town had nothing whatever to complain about: some were quite justifiably put out by the behaviour of some of the motorcyclists (apart that is from local traders and barkeepers, for whom the unexpected financial recompense outweighed the inconvenience). But equally, many who read the accounts in their morning papers failed to recognise it as being their own hamlet laid seige to by hundreds of lawless hellraisers. Nevertheless, the American media were anxious to lend weight to the public's fears of the new youth menace and to reassure citizens about

the continued validity and sanctity of the 'American way of life'. They felt compelled to regale their readership with descriptions of the weekend's proceedings that were, if not exactly fictitious, at the very least highly coloured and selective.

Life magazine of 21st July 1947 picked up on the furore and made certain that everybody from New Mexico to New York became aware of the wholesale threat to law and order precipitated by the Hollister events. Under a carefully posed photograph of a large gentleman on a motorcycle , clutching a bottle of beer in either hand, looking more like an off-duty truck driver than a 'wild eyed barbarian', and replete with the requisite 'ordinary member of the public' looking on, it commenced its 'informed' report with the following words:

"On the fourth of July weekend, 4,000 members of a motorcycle club roared into Hollister, California, for a three-day convention. They quickly tired of ordinary motorcycle thrills and turned to more exciting stunts. Racing their bikes down the main street and through traffic lights, they rammed into restaurants and bars, breaking furniture and mirrors. Some rested awhile by the curb (see photo). Others hardly paused. Police arrested many for drunkenness and indecent exposure but could not restore order. Finally, after two days, the cyclists left with a brazen explanation, 'We like to show off ... It's just a lot of fun.' But Hollister's police chief took a different view. Wailed he, 'It's just one hell of a mess.'"

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Notwithstanding the fact that such a description didn't quite gell with the views of the events held by any of the participants involved in the affair - motorcyclists, police or public - the report predictably generated the response which Life appeared to be seeking. Not only were the rebels castigated by 'ordinary decent people', together with their elected representatives and law enforcement agencies, but also 'respectable' motorcycling organisations, notably the long-established American Motorcycle Association (A.M.A.) who had convened the Hollister races, anxiously fell over itself to disassociate both its organisation and individual A.M.A. members from the trouble making 'outlaws' who had turned up uninvited. Letters in the following issue of Life summed up the feelings of its readers towards the perpetrators of those terrible deeds. Many correspondents pointed out that it was only a 'small minority' of non-A.M.A. affiliated clubs which turned the sporting event into the debacle it became. The following letter is typical of the response:

"There is a natural tendency (writes a Mr. Wynn) when you first begin to ride a motorcycle to feel that you are above the crowd and consequently you may do many childish stunts to impress the bystander. However, the longer you ride, the healthier a respect you gain for the motorcycle itself and realise that you need possession of all your faculties to master this man-killer. Drinking beer, as our friend in the picture seems to be doing, is one of the fundamental 'don'ts' of riding.

"I would like to mention some ... safe and sane Hollywood motorcyclists: Clark Gable, Larry Parks, Randolph Scott.

Ward Bond, Andy Devine; I could go on ad infinitum."¹⁷

And another letter, from a member of the 'motorcycling establishment', displayed particular hysteria:

"Words are difficult (writes Paul Brockhaw, editor of Motorcyclist magazine) to express my shock ... We regret to acknowledge that there was a disorder in Hollister - not the act of 4,000 motorcyclists, but rather a small percentage of that number, aided by a much larger group of non-motorcyclists and mercenary-minded bar-keepers. We in no manner defend the culprits - in fact drastic action is under way to avoid recurrences of antics. You have, however, in presentation of this obnoxious picture, seared a pitiful brand on thousands of innocent, clean-cut, respectable, law-abiding young men and women who are the true representatives of an admirable sport."¹⁸

Life's 'authoritative' account of the damage and chaos which resulted in "nearly a hundred jailed cyclists and almost as many injured", was widely publicised. But, as Hunter S. Thompson points out:

"A hastily assembled force of only twenty-nine cops had the ('riot') ... under control by noon of July 5th. (And by nightfall that day, the main body of motorcyclists had left town). Those who stayed behind did so at the request of police; their punishment ranged from \$25 traffic fines to ninety days in jail for indecent exposure (the natural result of the imbibing by the motorcyclists of excessive quantities of beer, supplied to them by 'disgusted' traders). Of the 6,000 to 8,000 people supposedly involved in the fracas, a total of 50 were treated for (minor) injuries at the local hospital."¹⁹

Surprise, surprise, no convictions at all for serious or violent crimes. Unless one happens to include indecent exposure in such a context as a particularly offensive act, one must surely be forced to conclude that either Life's correspondent was blind, deaf, daft, or drunk himself, or the magazine, for reasons of its own, sought to create some sort of moral panic in the minds of its readership.

Nevertheless, in whosoever's interest Life had acted in publishing their report, the 'outsiders' had been well and truly labelled deviant, and that label was to stick fast. The word had been spread, and the word fell on receptive ears. All over America 'concerned citizens' held meetings to voice their opinions on the motorcycle thugs and prepared themselves for assaults on their own home towns. Town councils drew up prospective legislation aimed specifically against bikers. Sheriffs, deputies, state police and National Guardsmen tensed their muscles to repel the invaders. Meanwhile, all over America, working class boys dreamed of buying motorcycles, emulating the heroes of Hollister, and having a concerted dig at small town values and morality. The message was both received and understood.

Sure enough, some two months later, Riverside, California, the location of another in the popular series of A.M.A. sponsored 'Gypsy Tours', bore witness to a similar sequence of events to those which occurred at Hollister. This time however two people lost their lives in drunken motorcycle accidents. Again there was brawling and wild riding, many of the miscreants ending up in the local jail for their sins, but

as yet there was no evidence of organised mayhem. As 1947 drew to a close both sides retired to lick their wounds. The bikers for their part drew their ranks closer together, formalised the structures of their clubs and prepared for the onset of the new riding season. The A.M.A. wrung their hands and waited uneasily, hoping against hope that the summer's troubles had been a mere flash in the pan, and that everything would soon return to normal. They had never encountered such a problem in their history. Since their formation in 1924 the A.M.A. with the active backing of Harley-Davidson, America's premier motorcycle company, had managed to exercise an iron control over all aspects of motorcycling, both sporting and recreational. Nationwide membership figures stood at about 200,000 and the organisation had hitherto been able to make or break individual motorcycle clubs, whether A.M.A. affiliated or not. But, this time, they had a struggle on their hands. The new breed of motorcycle clubs owed nothing to sport, their members were road riders pure and simple, more at home on freeways and in bars than spectating at racing circuits. Of course they went along to the Gypsy Tours, because that was where the action was, or rather where the action could be made to happen, but it wasn't the racing they went for, that was far too dull. It was the opportunity to be with like-minded people and have a good time that prompted them to attend. They didn't want to be shoved around by some crew-cut A.M.A. official, to be controlled, that was the very thing that they were trying to escape from. One sort of 'establishment' was every bit as bad as another, the fact that the A.M.A. had for years held sway over the motorcycle world cut no ice at all with the outlaws, if anything

it made them even more resentful towards the 'guardians of the sport'.

The A.M.A. were to hope in vain for a return to normal as events during the summer of 1948 would prove - Enserado, New Mexico, Riverside again, and Porteville, California (fifteen years later, in 1963, to become the venue for the 'celebrated' Hells Angels Labour Day run, extensively cited in the Lynch Report), played unwilling hosts to motorcyclists who proudly claimed to be 'veterans' of the Hollister debacle. The fight was on, and the national press were making a meal of it. Lines of battle were being drawn up with the active assistance of both the A.M.A. and the police.

More than five thousand motorcyclists turned up for the July 4th run to Riverside. Ironically co-sponsored by the Sheriff's Training Association, the event was a shambles. A report in the Los Angeles Times describes the scene:

"Roaring through the downtown section (of town) last night, cyclists used traffic lights as starting signals for drag races down Main Street. Others blocked off traffic so their companions could spin circles in the middle of the main intersections."²⁰

At one stage the crowd were completely in control of a section of the town, which became a no-go area for Riverside police. Cars were stopped and overturned, and an Air Force Captain was beaten up whilst trying to run the blockade. The scene was catapulted on to the nation's radio and T.V. as the first significant youth riot in history.

The statement of Sheriff Carl F. Bayburn of the Riverside Police Department received nationwide publicity:

"He denounced the (offending) cyclists as 'riff-raff and hoodlums'.

"He made it clear, however, that the majority of the cyclists were not of this type. 'They took their sport seriously', he said, 'and had parked their equipment and registered at local hotels for a good nights sleep. The rioters', he went on, 'do not belong to any recognised motorcycle group.'" ²¹

'Recognised' by the A.M.A. they may not have been, but recognised by the media they certainly were. Sheriff Bayburn was supported in his views by Riverside Police Chief J. A. Bennett who, for the first time, publicly attributed the disruption caused to 'outlaw clubs', a disruption which those involved were more than happy to have foisted upon them. Police Chief Bennett laid the blame for the 'rioting and trouble that turned the city's downtown section into a madhouse for three straight days' at the feet of "a small minority of the visiting motorcyclists", but pointed out that the event's sponsor, the American Motorcycle Association, was composed of "law-abiding sportsmen."

"He said that of the estimated 3,000 to 5,000 cyclists who attended, only a small number had misbehaved. A small percentage of members from 'outlaw' clubs have insisted on endeavouring to ruin the show ... this group has dogged (the A.M.A.'s) tracks wherever they stage an event. Their purpose is to discredit the bona fide cycling association." ²²

The A.M.A., for its part, went one step further. In response to politicians throughout the golden state, who saw in the series of biker 'riots' an ideal opportunity to jump on the bandwagon and push the law-and-order crusade, the motorcycling organisation responded to the call for the banning of its events by attempting to isolate the 'hooligan element' even further. When the League of California Cities called for a statewide ban on motorcycle race meetings, the A.M.A. issued a much publicised press statement declaring its intention to outlaw these clubs and individuals who were "ruining the sport". Its Executive Secretary, Linton A. Kuckler, told the press that his organisation felt that: "The disreputable cyclists were possibly 1 per cent of the total number of motorcyclists, only 1 per cent are hoodlums and troublemakers."²³

As Thompson rightly remarks, using the A.M.A.'s 1 per cent criterion, and taking the 1967 national figure for two-wheel registrations (which then stood at over 6 million), 60,000 outlaws would have taken to the highways in that year alone - hardly an insignificant figure. However, the actual numbers of bikers involved in these incidents was not really important. What was of greater and lasting significance was that, in its attempt to exonerate itself from any responsibility for the "hoodlums and troublemakers", the A.M.A. unwittingly created a collective badge of identity for its less than respectable hangers-on. The organisation was hoist by its own petard. Far from feeling suitably chastened by the A.M.A.'s condemnation, the dissident motorcyclists were proud to accept their alienation, and promptly adopted the '1 per center' symbol as a mark of their separation from the straight bikers

they so much despised. Having been thus publicly labelled, the 'deviant' minority first took to wearing the '1 per center' patches on their jackets and then self-consciously set about turning their hitherto informal loose-knit clubs into formal, structured outlaw clubs, many of which remain in existence today, almost forty years later. The Hells Angels themselves held their initial meeting on the 17th March 1948 in San Bernadino - Berdoo - California. They took their name from that of a U.S. Air Force bomber squadron, not from the Howard Hughes film of the name as popularly imagined, the 303rd bombardment group, born on 3rd February 1942, some of whose members had been bikers before the outbreak of war and returned home to ride together after demobilisation. They were transferred to London from El Paso, Texas, and earned the name 'The First 300 Hells Angels' after completing three hundred missions. The title Hells Angels came from a casual name scrawled along the fuselage of one of the planes, an old B 17. The 303rd First 300 Hells Angels consisted of four squadrons and nine ground support units: the squadrons were the 358th, 359th, 360th and 427th. Their emblem was four lightning bolts striking the centrepoint of a bomb, with the words 'Might In Flight' written on a ribbon at the top. It is not recorded, however, why the death's head winged skull emblem was adopted by the motorcycle club, nor where it was taken from. The First 300 Hells Angels received two Congressional Medals of Honour and four Distinguished Service Crosses, as well as a Presidential Citation. The group was deactivated in 1945, their name standing proud on the U.S. Air Force's Roll of Honour. Less than twenty years later, the same name was to become very much more famous, only this time in a completely

different context.

Clubs like the Hells Angels didn't have to rely upon the A.M.A. to provide venues where they could get together and indulge in the kinds of activities which the media, the police and the A.M.A. had broadly defined as appropriate behaviour for outlaw bikers, they generated their own events, and began to build, stage by stage, the nucleus of a subculture which has spread right across the world.

George Wethern, later to become Vice President of the Oakland chapter of the Hells Angels recalls the outlaws immediate reaction to the A.M.A. statement:

"A conference was held in San Francisco between the Hells Angels' statewide leadership including representatives from southern California ... (and the) leaders of clubs like the Gypsy Jokers, Road Rats, Galloping Geese, Satan's Slaves, a North Beach club called the Presidents and Mofos, a funky outfit that looked more like winos than bikers ...

"It was a historic gathering, sort of like the Yalta Conference. Clubs that had traded stompings and chain whippings for years were parleying over a mutual problem ...

"We gotta stop fighting ourselves and start fighting the cops', we'd say as the (wine) jug was passed. Everyone related instances of over-zealous law enforcement and downright frame-ups. And we kicked around a hostile statement from the American Motorcycle Association, the Flks Club of biking, which drew a distinction between its members and us renegades, and which characterised 99 per cent of the country's motorcyclists as clean-living folks enjoying pure sport. But it condemned the

other 1 per cent as antisocial barbarians who'd still be scum riding horses or surfboards.

"The Angels and our friends, rather than being insulted, decided to exploit the glowing tribute. We voted to ally under a '1 per center' patch. As a supplement to our regular colours, it would identify the wearer as a righteous outlaw. The patch also could help avoid counterproductive in-fighting because an Angel, Mofo or any 1 per center would be banded against a common enemy.

"Everyone knew the patch was a deliberately provocative gesture, but we wanted to draw deep lines between ourselves and the pretenders and weekenders who only played with motorcycles ...

"We were beginning to believe in our own mystique. As we stacked a few rules and rituals as the simple foundations of motorcycle riding, we thought we were building a little army." ²⁴

But it was left to Hollywood to put the icing on the cake and create, once and for all, the definitive image of this new breed of motorcyclists - the lawless rebels of the highway who, respecting no-one but their own kind, hunted in packs, preying on all those who had the effrontery to stand up for decency, morality and property rights - in short, 'The Wild Ones'.

CHAPTER III : THE OUTLAW BECOMES A HERO

"Four of us downshifting/four/three/two/one
exhausts backing off/rumbling/rolling/throttles
the line of faces outside the neighbourhood theatre
turning towards our machines/us/the menace
feet down/rolling back wheels to the curb
hit kill buttons/pull compression releases
in unison/parked all in a neat row
shucked off gloves/stomped to the window in boots
with popcorn there was a stupid love story
then they came/down the road/Brando riding
a Triumph/trophy taped to the bars/serious
riding the wrong lane/defying traffic
riding a pretty square bike/all road equipment
a serious look on his puffy boyish face
but riding the way we'd always wanted to
not giving a damn/we knew/we knew
and those other freaks/Marvin's riding circus
clowns/what was their game?/Their future?
stripped bikes/dragging for beers/riding
right into the tavern/who were they?
later/swaggering out/kicking it like Brando
riding cool/turning it on down dark streets
we knew they'd finally made a real bike film
we knew we'd seen something" ²⁵

Brando was cast in the role of Johnny, leader of the Black
Rebels Motorcycle Club. Resplendent in black leather jacket,
denim jeans and boots, topped off with a peaked cap pulled

down low, he epitomised in the eyes of the great American public, the truly authentic face of the motorcycle-borne outlaw. (The British Board of Film Censors, in their infinite wisdom, felt that the movie was 'undesirable for general exhibition' until some fifteen years after its release in the United States). Like Easy Rider, a generation later, The Wild One created the image of the biker that haunted the minds and the writings of script-writers for years to come. Brando did for biking what Presley was yet to do for rock and roll, and there was no turning back. What did it matter that the image portrayed didn't exactly tie with the reality? Who really cared whether or not the ragged, swaggering, drunk Chino, played by a youthful Lee Marvin, leader of a rival bike club, represented a far more accurate picture of the kind of individual responsible for the 'invasions' of Hollister, Riverside and Porterville? It was Brando, the mean, the moody, and the magnificent rebel who became the stereotype upon which the universalised mass motorcycle subculture of the late 1950s and 1960s was founded.

From its origins in Northern California the idea of a subcultural style, available to all who chose to adopt it, was catapulted on to the national, and soon the international, scene. The more extreme precursors of the motorcycle subculture still survived however, as the bogeymen of Middle America, the 'stars' of many a dubious work of fiction and second-rate 'B' movie, eventually to be publicly resurrected to form the hardcore of the outlaw biker revival of the late sixties. But meanwhile, the media image stood unchallenged - Dylan's classic combination of 'the black-madonna motorcycle two-wheeled gypsy queen/ and the silver-studded phantom who causes the grey-flannel dwarf

to scream"²⁶ evoked the image that 'fitted', not only amongst the clientele of the hamburger joints and drive-ins of downtown Los Angeles, but also in the coffee bars and juke-box dives bordering London's North Circular Road. At the Ace Cafe and the Busy Bee, 'ton-up boys' practised their scowls in Seven-Up mirrors before donning their converted milkmen's caps and blasting off into the night along rain-washed tarmac to invade Bethnal Green, Romford or who know's where.

The day had dawned when the motorcycle ceased, for all time, to be exclusively either cheap ride-to-work transport for the financially hard-pressed manual worker or the sporting mount of the more adventurous bourgeois. It became instead the object around which a specifically working class subcultural style was generated and sustained. It was a commodity reappropriated and redefined until it came to represent a symbol of resistance to the all-embracing hegemony of the dominant culture, a means of mobility, and a means of escape. The motorcycle, which was both relatively cheap and readily available, became not only a source of previously denied mobility but also, much more importantly, the nuts and bolts around which the everyday leisure activities of a significant sector of working class youth came to be organised.

The arrival of the motorcycle as a means of transport materially accessible to the mass of working class youth - in America during the mid-1940s and a decade later in Europe - meant, for the first time, that the horizons of leisure activity were extended beyond the confines of the local high street cafe or dance hall. Over and above the new-found freedom of mobility, the motorcycle offered a 'magical release' from the prison of

work-a-day life. To ride a motorcycle meant much more than sitting behind the wheel of the family saloon - it was exciting, it was noisy, it was brash and, what's more, it got up the nose of authority. To ride a motorcycle, and to ride it in a fashion that displayed an obvious contempt for both personal safety and the exigencies of the Highway Code, was in itself a rebellious act. The more Joe Public was shocked and irritated by the spectacle, the better it felt. So what if you were only a warehouse boy who spent fifty hours a week, every week, sweeping floors and loading lorries? So what if you got shouted at all day long by the foreman and all weekend by your old man? At night, gunning it on under the neon lights of the freeway, the wind tugging at your hair and your girl close-pressed behind you, you were a king - and nobody or nothing could take that away. You didn't have to take your problem to the United Nations, you could banish the 'Summertime Blues' just by twisting back the throttle and watching the speedo needle arc its way across the dial towards oblivion. To hell with the danger. So long as Buddy, Richie and the Big Bopper were up there watching over you - like rock'n'roll you'd never die - nothing could go wrong. And what if it did? Heaven had to be a bloody sight better than Berdoo or, for that matter, Battersea. And there would be the Teen Angel, ready at the gates, waiting, open-hearted and open-limbed, for all who dared defy mortality. The motorcycle was your own reality, and the motorcycle subculture offered a status which transcended that ascribed to you by your social position in the hierarchy of inequality. Your mates knew how you felt, even if nobody else in the world cared a damn. And to be something in their eyes became the only thing that mattered.

"There's no experience (writes one teenage convert) like riding a (bike). It's a huge sleek and sinister brute, capable of amazing feats of power and speed. As soon as I felt comfortable and began to adjust to the machine, I found myself cranking it on, letting off and cranking on again ... I was stepping over the threshold, passing from my earthbound, slovenly existence into a world of strength, speed and prestige. The (bike) was a status symbol, indeed. Wherever I went, coasting along, people turned their heads to stare. Some of them openly envious, others interested, and some obviously appalled, but there was a common reaction in all of them. They either envied me or were afraid of me. Before I had the bike I was a nothing. A nameless face in the crowd. A ragged urchin from the streets who didn't belong anywhere and would never amount to anything. The (bike) changed all that. Now I was something ... somebody."²⁷

It is not, of course, contended that this entire subcultural explosion can be traced solely to the release of "The Wild One". However, the movie projected the image which brought together many separate strands of development in the motorcycle subculture. It was an image which fitted a particular conjunctural moment, and an image which stuck, mainly because of the immediate and overwhelming reaction that Brando's outlaw received from a hysterical media.

The film itself, when viewed today, certainly appears innocuous enough. The fight scenes have an obviously stage-managed character and there is a noticeable absence of either bad language or gratuitous violence. Indeed, when in 1968 the British Board of Film Censors finally relented and granted the

film an 'X' Certificate, and it duly arrived at the Columbia, Shaftesbury Avenue, the reception given it by Fleet Street was exceptionally tame. The unanimous verdict was well summed up by the Daily Express headline 'The Wild One Is Such A Mild One Now'. But although in retrospect it might appear rather a quaint, if interesting, period piece, in the highly charged atmosphere of public condemnation following the wave of biker riots in the late 1940s, it shocked and outraged American cinema-goers in a big big way.

The plot itself was loosely based on a little-known and best-forgotten Hollister-inspired story called 'Cyclist Raid', written by Frank Rooney and published in the January 1951 edition of Harper's magazine. In the words of producer Stanley Kramer, it "touched (his) sense of social responsibility".²⁸

The Wild One tells the by now all too familiar story of two groups of bikers who take over a sleepy Midwestern town and proceed to race around at breakneck speed, demolishing everything in sight, and subjecting the patient townspeople to torrents of (very seemly) abuse. After much marauding and brawling, the false imprisonment of Johnny (Brando) for running down a young girl, and his subsequent break-out from jail, the sheriff's daughter, her father no longer able to cope with the situation, manages to persuade the villain to see the error of his ways. Johnny promptly falls in love with her, renounces his past life and turns against Chino (Marvin), his incorrigible arch-rival. He drives the usurper out of town, earning the eternal gratitude of the decent folks, and proving to one and all that good inevitably triumphs over evil. Then, in true 'folk devil' fashion, far beyond the appeal of 'reason', he

disappears into the sunset, a reformed man, but an outcast still.

The film aimed to educate the American public to understand that not all black leather jacketed motorcycle drifters were barbaric ne're do wells, in spite of their aimless, nomadic lifestyle demonstrating that by avoiding panic and adopting a more tolerant approach conflict could be minimised. Unfortunately, given the prevailing climate of fear and suspicion that sbounded in Macarthyite America, this sterling message was lost on the cinema-going public, and the only thing that did manage to permeate through was the alarming vision of lawless gangs of leather-clad, amoral, inarticulate yobbos who could, with little opposition, run amok in civilised American towns. The same message was received and understood, not only by patriotic, red-neck John Birchers, but also by those who relished the prospect of shocking their moral and political guardians by indulging in similar sorts of behaviour. As Life magazine, in its twenty-fifth anniversary issue of July 1972, put it:

"The Wild One became a milestone in movie history, launching the cult of gang violence in films. It also helped create an image of motorcycling that non-violent bike riders have been trying to live down for a quarter of a century now."²⁹

A contemporary reviewer was slightly more direct:

"The subject of its (the movie's) examination is a swarm of youthful motorcyclists who ride through the country in wolf-pack fashion and terrorize the people of one small town. Given to jive or be-bop lingo and the grotesque costumes and attitudes of the 'crazy' cognoscenti, these 'wild ones' resent discipline and show an aggressive contempt for decency and the police.

Reckless and vandalistic, they live for sensations, nothing more - save perhaps the supreme sensation of defying the normal world." ³⁰

Despite the almost universal misunderstanding of his production, Kramer himself stoutly maintained that the film, as originally conceived, "understood and captured a tear in the fabric of society" ³¹, and hence represented a very real attempt to heal the split between young and old before it was too late. He says of the movie:

"There was no glorification of violence ... we simply showed that this was the first indication that a whole set of people were going to divorce themselves from society and set up their own standards." ³²

So, where did Kramer go wrong? How was it that the message became so incredibly distorted? For a start, "The Wild One" encountered mammoth problems in the making. Kramer recalls how he:

"... gathered together a band of motorcyclists - a gang just like the one that made the newspapers earlier ... Brando and I talked to them, and then the writer Ben Maddow was brought in. But he was subpoenaed by (the) House of Un-American Activities Committee ... So John Paxton took over the script.

"These guys were a new breed, and there weren't many of them around ... They all had girls and were living like nomads. A lot of the dialogue is taken from our actual conversation with them. All the talk about 'we gotta go, that's all ...' 'Just gotta move on' was something we heard over and over. And one of the most famous lines in the film came from my

conversation with them, too. I asked one of the kids, 'What are you rebelling against?' and he answered, 'What have you got?'

"Well, we ran into trouble with the censors, who said that it was an anti-American, Communist film! In the original version, we told the truth about the (Hollister) incident - that no charges were brought against the boys because they bought so much business to the town! But the censors said that this was unsuitable! They made us cut it out ..." 33

Kramer's social message was, in the suffocatingly narrow world of film-making in the 1950s both unacceptable and unfashionable, his honesty condemned as 'un-American'. It most certainly wasn't the message that the authorities wished to hear, true or otherwise. Sadly, but inevitably, bigotry ruled the day. His hands were well and truly tied. He could either portray his teenage rebels the way that the censors wanted, or pack the film in completely. His decision to capitulate to the opposition and re-think the whole project is echoed in the words of Johnny in the opening moments of the film:

"Once the trouble was under way, I just went along with it." 34

By 'just going along with it', Kramer unintentionally created a monster which would take years to put down. Not that Kramer's 'new breed of nomads' cared a damn whether or not leather clad Marlon Brando had suddenly become their 'public face', they were too busy getting on with the daily routine of life on the road. These early outlaw clubs - the oldest remembered being the McCook Outlaws, the direct predecessors of

the infamous Outlaw Motorcycle Club, America's second largest outlaw club after the Hells Angels, which disbanded in late 1947, when most of its surviving members became Chicago motorcycle cops - were a very far cry from the 'classic' vision of a Hells Angel. Many of them still dressed, and behaved, like the ex-servicemen that they were. They wore their hair short, greased and slicked back and, apart from the fact that they rode around on motorcycles, differed little in appearance from the countless thousands of other WWII veterans - turned - hobos that roamed the highways and byways of the United States singly or in groups, gathering together here and there in shanty town camps, or holding impromptu drinking parties by the side of the road, wherever half a dozen or more happened to stumble across each other. But, the important distinction between the early bikers and other drifters was simply the amount of money necessary to keep their chosen means of transport operational. It didn't cost a penny to ride the tracks or tramp the trails, but maintaining a 1200 c.c. Harley-Davidson in good running fettle demanded a regular input of dollars, which had to be acquired one way or another. This tended to necessitate the setting up of semi-permanent bases - 'safe' areas where the individuals concerned could congregate for parts of the year and, having thus established themselves, become at least partially acceptable to the local townspeople - which soon became identified as the territory of one or other particular outlaw club. As these bases gained recognition amongst the wider subculture, previously unaligned riders arrived on the scene, intent on seeking membership of the club in residence. Thus, the proportion of bikers involved in club activity increased, and the clubs were steadily consolidated

organisationally. These clubs still went off on mass runs, both to A.M.A. events and other destinations, to party with other outlaws, but a large part of their time was occupied with taking care of their own designated territory, guarding their frontiers against incursions from uninvited members of other clubs, and building up their strength. Some, like the Angels, forged permanent links with clubs in different areas, and eventually amalgamated under the same banner.

The majority of clubs however, at this time, remained loose-knit informal groups of individuals, who would come and go at will, joining, leaving, and rejoining as they chose. The wearing of back patches was still relatively rare, except amongst the more notable clubs - Hells Angels, Gypsy Jokers, Satans Slaves, Galloping Geese, Outlaws, Booze Fighters and Market Street Commandos - most outlaws being content to wear the A.M.A. patch in the middle of the seat of their pants, as gesture of contempt for the body that had cast them out. On August 1st 1954, the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club spread their wings from San Bernadino to San Francisco, incorporating the Market Street Commandos, a club which traced its history back to pre-Hollister days, into the organisation, marking the occasion by the issuing of the first of more than seventy official Hells Angels charters, and alarming the California Highway Patrol who found it increasingly difficult to keep tabs on members who now moved freely from one chapter to another if their legal position got a little too hot for comfort. Birney Jarvis, a reporter for the San Francisco Chronicle, in an article for Male magazine, described the actual metamorphosis from Market Street Commando to Hells Angel:

"One hot summer day in 1954, a swarthy handsome develt, sporting a pointed beard and derby, broadsided his Harley-Davidson to a screeching halt at a motorcycle hang-out in San Francisco.

"His faded blue Levi's jacket, the sleeves roughly hacked off with a knife, was emblazoned with the leering, winged death's head that has become so well known to California lawmen.

"You could see the sweat-stained armpits of his checkered shirt as he wrestled the four-foot-high (sic) handlebars into position. With a flick of his wrist he blasted the afternoon quiet of a Sunday in Market Street.

"He laid his bike over on the kickstand, polished the gleaming chrome of his 'XA' spring (sic) forks - four inches longer than stock - with a ragged handkerchief. He looked around him, nonchalantly wiping his greasy hands on his oil-crusted jeans.

"This was Rocky. Nobody cared what his last name was because he was 'classical' and he was a Hells Angel from down Berdoo way.

"Thirty cyclists with polished boots and neat barbered hair had watched his arrival, not without suspicion because he was, at the time, a stranger and all of them had been riding pals for a long time. The welcoming committee was prime for membership in the Hells Angels. Although completely square compared to the latter-day Angels, the street corner gang had had constant brushes with the law ... Rocky was elected president of this new branch of the Hells Angels because he could really ride and because he had style.

"He could spin donuts on that hog with his feet on the pegs, and man, he was a wiggy cat,' a member of the Angels recalled. The cyclists found a seamstress who could duplicate Rocky's sinister emblem and it wasn't long before nearly 40 Angels were roaring out of San Francisco. The neat 'Hells Angels - Frisco' surrounding the grinning skull with wings cost \$7.50 and was ordinarily sewn on a Levis jacket. The white background of the red lettering soon became spotted with grime - and blood - from the many barroom battles that ensued."35

By this means, the more powerful and better organised clubs, having established a secure territorial base, ventured beyond their own areas to take over other clubs whom they considered to be eligible raw material for incorporation. They shaped these newly recruited clubs into their own image of how the arch typical outlaw motorcycle club should be, and those individuals who failed to live up to the new demands expected of them either gave up and left or were kicked out. Members from rival outlaw clubs, seeing the rise of one club with two or more chapters in different areas were encouraged to drop their own patches and join up, creating friction in the process. Danny Lyon, a founder member of the Outlaws M.C. turned writer, recorded the following interview with one such individual - Cal - during the late 1950s:

"I was in the Straight Satans. I had the Straight Satans colours. That's why I did this, man. See, because they thought that just because they were fuckin' Angels they would fuck with me, you hip to it? And, you know, I'm sort of like a junior Hells Angel. My club means just as much to me as his club does you know? Because I was in this club for a long

time, too, the Straight Satans. Not the Satan's Slaves, the Straight Satans, different club. That's why I fucked over these two guys, Angels. I got this new scooter, see? I just got this new Triumph, you know? And I already broke it in and everything. I just got through gunkin' it down and everything, polishing it up. 'Cause it's brand, spankin' new. Breakin' it in. And so, after I got through polishing it, I decided to take a little putt with my scooter. And I'm trippin' along on the freeway, you know, mindin' my own business, drivin' slow like I usually drive, sixty-five, just puttin' along, staying up with the traffic. 'Cause in town on the freeways, in town in Los Angeles, man, they go sixty-five, not forty-five, thirty-five. You know this Freeway, the Dan Ryan? You hip to it? You know the mileage you have to go? Forty-five miles an hour. They hold that as a minimum, that's your minimum speed, forty-five on the freeways in California. But anyhow, I'm trippin' along, way out, man, I'm out about Pomona, and these two dudes come up to me in the back. And I'm puttin' along, just minding my own business. And one of them pushes my handlebar just like that, you know? And, man, I'm in a panic. I'm going off the freeway into this ice plant. I don't know if you know what an ice plant is, but if you're ever in California, look alongside the freeway and stop if you want. It's just like watermelon, things. That's why it's called ice plant. And I'm going off at sixty-five miles an hour about. 'Cause he pushed my handlebars pretty good. I goes off into this ice plant and it's pretty slippery and everything, man. And like they cranked on and split, see? And so I'm hassling this ice plant, I'm really slipping all around, I'm going down in what it is, see? So I drops it down into second gear. By this time I'm just about

stopped and almost falling, man. And I cranks it on. And I just, I sort of like - I'm flt-tracking out of that place now, you hip to it? I'm comin' up back on the freeway. I'm shootin' right straight up for the freeway. And I gets on the freeway, man, and I start chasing these dudes. And I really turn that goddam Triumph on, you hip to it? And then it was hardly broke in. And I came up to 'em and they didn't see me. They figured, you know, well, this dude, he's had it. So I'm coming up on 'em and they don't hear me, see? And I just come right up in between both of 'em and push both their handlebars, see? And then I cranked on, and I split for a while. And what I would do, man, is I knew, see, I didn't push their handlebars hard enough to do any damage to them - to knock 'em one way or another. Just more or less disturbed their driving. 'Cause you don't have that much leverage when you're using both hands, alongside. And so, anyhow, I'd wait for 'em. I had a brand new Bonneville, see? This is about '59. You know who built it? A guy named Kulan. He's in Jacksonville, Florida. And that fucker could really go, you hip to it? I had all the best cams in it and everything from Kulan. We put cams in it. And Kulan pistons and what not. And I'd just wait for these guys, you know? To pull up on my tail, man, about ten feet away, and then I'd turn it on and I'd split. And then I'd wait for 'em. I was playing with these people, man. I played with 'em for fifteen miles. And this was blowin' their minds, see? So I said, well, I'm tired of this little game, 'cause I didn't want them two to catch me. So I turned it on. I really turned it on and I just split out of sight. I sees this cafe comin' up, so I pull over to the cafe, you know, and I decide to get me a cup of coffee. I put my bike on the center stand and all that

jazz, went inside, ordered me a cup of coffee. And by the time like the waitress got to me and served me with my coffee, I heard these two bikes comin' in like. They caught me. You hip to it? So they park their bikes, put 'em on the kick stand and as they're walkin'- they parked their bikes behind my bike, in other words, I couldn't get out, see? And as they're walkin' by my bike one of them starts to sit on it. And so I come out of my tree. I figure, what these dudes gonna do? Fuck up my new bike? Like kick in the carburetors? And sparks and what-not? Gonna play some games? So I come out of the door and I says, I hope you guys don't get no idea about that bike. You know, like I'd get salty. In other words, I told 'em how it is. And so this guy, man, they called him Jesus 'cause he looked just like Jesus Christ. The fucker had long hair, way down here, man. And it was combed straight and beautiful hair, man, you know, for a dude. Anyhow, he acted like God, too. That's another thing. Every time we'd go on a run he'd find the highest place and he'd pray. You hip to it? The dude was a hypnotist, too, man. He used mass hypnosis. A whole group. Are you hip to this now? The dude was an artist and here he was a Hells Angel. And he spent some time in prison, man, with a hypnotist, that's how come, see, the hypnotist was in there for doin' some illegal scene. But anyhow, he was the one sittin' on my bike. And the other guy, man, was just - he wasn't too big. This guy, this Jesus, man he was about six four, see and about 230 pounds, big mother. That's why he acted like God. He was big and bad. And this other guy was just, you know, a dude like Funny Sonny (Chicago Outlaw, and ex-Hells Angels member). And so they ain't said a word to me. They're bumming my mind now, see, they ain't talking one way or another. They ain't even talking

to each other. While we were outside, there was a span of maybe about three or four minutes. And three or four minutes is a long time when you don't know if you're gonna get hassled or not. And so the guy got off the bike and he says, let's go have a cup of coffee. You know? In other words, he hung it up. They decided not to hassle me, right there. So anyhow, we're having a cup of coffee and we're talking about each other's clubs. And it happened to be that I was straight, too, you know? In other words, I turned them on to some dope and they turned me on. Like we had a mutual scene right there, you hip to it? And so we went outside, we did up a couple of numbers. This is before we split from the restaurant. And we started talking about each other's clubs. And they invited me over to their meeting. 'Cause this is where they were going. See, when they started hassling. They were going to their meeting, I hassled their mind so bad they hung up their meeting, man, to catch me and fuck me up. 'Cause you don't fuck with Angels unless you want to be fucked with. See, in California. Anyhow, so they invited me to their meeting. Then, after we got through smoking the joints, we split off to the meeting and we played tag going there. You ever play tag on a bike?" 36

CHAPTER IV : THE OUTLAW AS A COMMODITY

Via a process of action and reaction, the motorcycle subculture was undergoing a rapid process of evolution. In little less than a decade, it had spread from a few relatively small groups of ex-G.I. bike enthusiasts into a mass subculture, spreading far beyond the confines of California, across the whole of the North American continent and into Europe and Australasia. But, it is important to bear in mind the nature of that mass subculture. In no way, even superficially, did it mirror its direct precursors, the hardcore Californian outlaw clubs, whose members were busy consolidating their own lifestyle as far away from the public gaze as possible. The wider subculture took its cue from Brando, the public face of the outlaw biker, and moulded itself in his image. Its adherents liked to think of themselves as rebels which, in the stifling climate of the fifties, they probably were. But these 'rebels' who alarmed the public and alerted the police forces of a dozen or more countries, were only an extremely watered-down version of the 'real' outlaws who roamed the freeways around the San Francisco bay. They didn't even look the same, the outlaws scorned the wearing of leather jackets that were fast becoming the only acceptable garb for teenage motorcyclists, in favour of sleeveless denim vests, known as cut-offs, which afforded only minimal protection in a spill, where direct contact between skin and tarmac, even at slow speeds, could result in serious injury.

The bikes that they favoured were also a far cry from the machines which had come to be identified as *de rigueur* in the

wider subculture.. Outlaw bikes, or choppers as they became known, were a direct development of the drag bikes of the day, more often than not American made Harley-Davidsons or Indians, primarily intended for off-road straight-line racing, but reworked and restyled for street use. They were low-slung, laid back, didn't go round corners particularly well, but were the ideal tool for mile after mile of effortless highway cruising - and they looked outrageous. The bikes adopted by the wider subculture were, on the other hand, primarily adaptations of the kind of machines campaigned on the twisty road racing circuits of Europe, notably the Isle of Man, and used on the street in a very similar fashion. It is interesting to note that the American outlaws, by the end of the 1950s, had almost entirely divorced themselves from the world of motorcycle sport. They had turned their backs on the A.M.A. (or rather the A.M.A. had turned its back on them), and consequently, apart from minor involvement in amateur drag racing, had no further interest in professional motorcycle racing. As such, they were probably the first group of motorcyclists to collectively eschew the action of the race track and concentrate solely upon street riding, a factor which greatly influenced the ongoing evolution of a whole new generation of motorcycles, designed specifically for the street. Ninety-nine percent of the subculture, however, brought into the fray in the wake of Brando, had no such dispute with the racing world and, particularly in Europe, still found their attention on the race track. Their heroes were the top line professional road racers - Geoff Duke, John Surtees, and the young Mike Hailwood - people who had seldom, if ever, swung a leg over a road going motorcycle. When they weren't off for a sunny day at the seaside,

they spent the day shouting themselves hoarse at race meetings. In Britain, circuits like Lydden, Oliver's Mount, Silverstone, Thruxton, and of course Brands Hatch, became focal points for the gathering together of youthful bikers and played a major part in the evolution of the subculture. It is hardly surprising then that the bikes they chose to ride on the street bore a direct resemblance to works racing machines.

Another important point concerns the wearing of club colours, a practice increasingly adopted by the California outlaws during the fifties. It was a practice which was copied from mainstream A.M.A. affiliated competition clubs who had worn different back patches for years in order that spectators and supporters might more easily recognise who was who on the race track. The outlaws took to wearing colours emblazoned with names and emblems calculated to annoy the racers, who had a great deal of pride in their clean-cut appearance. The general public, unable to tell the difference between the two, were inclined to view either group with, at best, suspicion, and at worst, open hostility. This naturally led to a great deal of bitterness and resentment towards the usurpers from establishment motorcyclists. Danny Lyon quotes an interview with Rodney Pink, a motorcycle racer, and A.M.A. affiliated club member, who explains his attitude towards his own club, towards the outlaws and towards the wearing of colours:

"Everyone wants to be part of something. You want to carry a flag or wear an emblem or do something. I've seen this in my own club. People wanted to join my club because it has a reputation, a good reputation. But they don't want responsibility or work. They just want to be part of something. And, you know

be able to forget it or just take it or leave it. And generally people that join most of the outlaw style of clubs are that sort of person. They want to be part of something and yet they don't have the initiative. They don't want to have any responsibility unloaded on 'em. Like an outlaw club will almost, almost I say, never promote anything. Maybe a dance is the biggest thing they'll do. You know, if they happen to dig it. Because as soon as you promote something, people get burdened with jobs... The average person that goes in for that sort of club is very low on initiative and high on talk. In my club you're constantly hung with a job. But you don't wear the colours unless you're working for it. And when you wear the colours you really feel like you're doin' something. I wouldn't race a motorcycle if I didn't have green on. That may sound funny, but I went out and spent eighty dollars for a pair of leathers. And I had 'em custom made in green, green leather ... 'Cause these are my club colours. I'm proud of my cuub. We'll go to a racetrack whenever it's needed. We'll spend the whole Sunday there ...

"My club's a rider's club. It's a club with approximately thirty members who believe wholeheartedly in sponsoring events for the riders, the motorcyclists, to better the sport, and no noisy pipes are allowed in the club, no ape hangers ... We're not out to look special or feel special. Being on a motorcycle doesn't make you special at all. And a lot of guys figure that it does..."³⁷

It is clear that outlaw motorcycle clubs like the Hells Angels were directly derived from, both in terms of organisation and appearance, the 'straight' motorcycle racing clubs, which they selfconsciously parodied. This, not surprisingly, led to

a great deal of friction between the establishment clubs and their delinquent offspring, and eventually resulted in a complete and irreversible split between the two groups. In Europe, however, and throughout the rest of the world, the American penchant for forming publicly identifiable clubs was not present and, although there were of course motorcycle racing clubs, these did not demand from their members anything like the high degree of commitment and club loyalty as displayed by their American counterparts. The wearing of club colours in the form of back patches was entirely unknown outside of the United States, racers and roadriders alike opting for the ubiquitous uniform of black leather typically topped off with a white silk scarf, highly polished boots and seamen's socks, the more adventurous decorating their jackets with silver studs arranged in intricate patterns. The generic link between the new motorcycle subculture and the parent culture, centred around the world of competitive off-road racing, was present in both cases, but in essence they were radically different.

As the young bike-riding population expanded, a previously ailing motorcycle industry rubbed its hands with scarcely concealed delight and rapidly geared itself up to produce the kind of machine, and to project the kind of image, that they felt would appeal to this newly created leisure market. In America, the two giants which had dominated the home market for nearly half a century, Harley-Davidson and Indian, were hard hit as their major British competitors - Triumph, B.S.A., Norton, Ariel, Matchless, A.J.S., Royal Enfield - realising the vastly increased sales potential of their products, exported hastily redesigned and cosmetically updated models in their thousands. Gimmicky advertising campaigns were employed to convince the

American consumer that anyone who swung a leg over a motorcycle could become an instant rebel without being even remotely antisocial.

"B.S.A. and Norton suddenly discovered that sex could sell motorcycles. Scantily dressed women lounged on top of, in front of, and behind sparkling red B.S.A.s ...

"Motorcycle manufacturers had, in fact realised what disseminators of everything from Band-Aids to hair spray had long seen and applied - Naked Women Sell. And the motorcycle ... (achieved a new) standing as a sex object ... Norton, B.M.W., Triumph all made sexual allusions in their advertising, but there was no overt implication. No motorcycle manufacturer went as far as to say that the purchase of his product would get the girl into your bed. It might get you close to her, but you took it from there ...

"It was a long, long way from the early Exelsior and Brough Superior ads portraying dashing young men on bicycle-like machines with 'round torpedo gas tanks and detachable footrests'"³⁸

With the aid of clever copywriting, the motorcycle was transformed into the new 'fun machine', capable of making the most dedicated corporation man feel young and virile, even if he was fat, pushing forty, and well on the way to his first coronary. 'Go Further Faster On A Triumph And Get There In Style' and 'Matchless Sorts Out The Men From The Boys', screamed the messages on the hoardings. The industry threw its weight behind the campaigns to make the motorcycle rider once more a respectable member of society and, in so doing, further isolated those individuals who, through their behaviour, had placed themselves beyond the pale of civilised society.

"The Europeans ... were not about to let pass the opportunity to stuff the coffers with American dollars provided by power-hungry colonials ...

"The changes came, (they) smoothed out their engines, padded the seats of their fire-belchers, and tried, though they often failed, to cure their oil leaks.

"The machines from England became a status symbol among riders ... And all three major British companies resorted to the American style of advertising.

"Loud claims of power vied for attention. Colour photography displays abounded. There were contests and freebies given to bike buyers. Warranties were advertised. Accessories included, after-sale service promised, regular tune-ups offered. Free gas. Free helmets. Free jacket patches, passes for races, dates, driving lessons, insurance advice ..."³⁹

However, despite the progressive reassimilation of the motorcycle as an approved - and profitable - commodity, the problem of the recalcitrant minority of motorcycle-borne 'trouble-makers' was not so easily overcome. 'The Wild One' was far from having been laid to rest, as the onset of the 1960s would show. Outlaw clubs continued to spring up, composed of riders who were proud to be different, imitating not Brando - the image that had been twisted, distorted and made superficially decent for public consumption - but Marvin, the rebel who refused to conform. But, for the time being, the American press had lost interest in their doings which, however nefarious, were no longer considered shocking enough to make headlines. Outwardly at least, the beast had been held in check, but only for the

moment. And meanwhile, across the Atlantic, it was only just beginning to bare its teeth ...

CHAPTER V The Ton-Up Boys

"The dance was ending as they burst into the hall. They stood silently, staring, not moving yet somehow on the point of motion, like preying animals, fifteen or twenty boys wearing motorcycle kit. Their hair was greased and combed into styles called College Cut and Latin Cut and Campus Cut and Perry Como. Their expression was contemptuous and excited. A record of 'Good Night, Sweetheart', sung by Vera Lynn, was being amplified by the loudspeaker equipment attached to the wall above the door.

"Someone shouted derisively, 'Call that dancing?'

"'My Mum could do better.'

"'Come on Dad, move your fat arse.'

"One of them, ... suddenly seemed to become the leader ... His jacket had a tiger's head painted on the back, his black leather jeans were stuffed into ex-army dispatch rider's boots. He moved swiftly to the radiogram and, swinging his leg back, brought his boot crashing to the fan-shaped grill, splintering the wood and tearing the beige canvas material behind it.

"The other boys surged forward on to the floor. Some of them paired and started to jive. Another used the panelling of the door as a sounding board to beat out a rhythm.

"'Come on', yelled the leader ... 'Let's do it over.'

"He picked up a folding wooden chair and brought it down on top of the gramophone. The vicar advanced with his palms outstretched as if to calm them down.

"Boys, boys, Please. Let's not have any of the rough stuff.'" ⁴⁰

Corny dialogue, maybe, but this description, penned in 1961, of the wrecking of a church youth club by 'mindless leather jacketed yobbos' captures very well the quintessential image conjured up by the ton-up boys of the late 1950s - an image positively guaranteed to shock and dismay a British public still unable to come to terms with the realisation that the Suez crisis had sounded the final death knell of a glorious colonial past.

In a Britain emerging from the upheaval of the Second World War, where traditional patterns of working class life were in a state of flux, there was fertile ground for the evolution of a delinquent subculture which attempted to "defend, symbolically, a constantly threatened space and a declining status."⁴¹ by adopting a distinctive style of dress and "group-minded behaviour as a readily available, albeit imaginary solution, to the problems encountered in material life which remained insoluble."⁴²

The austerity of those immediate post-war years cast a cheerless grey mantle over the whole of British society - ration books, clothing coupons, bomb sites, pre-fabs, make-do-and-mend, queue for this, queue for that, queue for every other bloody thing. People were glad to be alive, if you could call it living; glad to get back to normal. But what was normal? Normal was just a memory, a faded photograph on the parlour wall. Normal was gone forever, buried beneath a hail of German bombs, shot to pieces on the battlefields of Europe and North Africa. Normal was shattered, battered and bent beyond all recognition. Normal was dead. But the older generation stubbornly refused to believe the evidence before their eyes, and carried on going through the motions. They knuckled down, unquestioning and uncomplaining, sustained by an unshakeable

conviction that everything would turn out all right in the end. With a combination of Almighty God on the one hand and the Welfare State on the other, the old way of life would be rebuilt, brick by brick if necessary. It was only a question of time.

But the young, born and raised in the turmoil of war, were not so sure. They had no roots, no 'golden past' to recapture. The days of the British Empire were as remote to them as ancient Rome. Fifteen years or fifteen hundred years, the past was history - irrelevant. The only thing that mattered was now. Life was for living, not for reminiscing. The older generation had had their go, and look what a mess they'd made of it - they'd fucked it up good and proper. Now it was up to the kids to have a go. There were jobs to be had and money to be earned. Maybe money couldn't buy happiness, but what it could buy certainly felt good. The older generation didn't understand, couldn't understand, wouldn't understand. Like the song said"

"It's Saturday night and I just got paid
Fool about my money, don't try to save.
My heart says go, go have a time.
It's Saturday night and, baby, I feel fine ..."⁴³

Who the hell needed 'security'? Security meant being tied down, 'planning for the future'. Who cared about the future anyway? The future, like the past, could take care of itself.

The teds were the first group to be associated with a unique subcultural style, the appearance of which was to generate a considerable adverse societal reaction, similar to that which marked the emergence of its American contemporary, the biker subculture. Teds quickly became associated, in the minds of

the public with gang violence and a decline in moral standards. They were the archetypical 'bad boys' of the 1950s. Even the most minor of incidents involving youths whose dress could be held to resemble the teddy boy style received widespread publicity in the media. And, just in case the public hadn't actually encountered the menace face to face, the newspapers fell over themselves to describe the enormity of the problem in such graphic detail that every home in the land was infinitely better acquainted with what and what was not typical teddy boy behaviour than the kids were themselves. The teddy boy was a violent, aggressive, monster, who chewed gum, put axle grease on his quiff, sewed fish hooks in his lapels, and carried a variety of nasty weapons, including knuckle dusters, flick knife, bicycle/toilet chain and cosh. They fought in gangs, threatened old ladies, seduced young girls, and woe betide anyone who stared at them too hard in the street. In actual fact, the teds liked to be stared at, wanted to be stared at, dressed to be stared at, revelled in being stared at. Ignoring the spectators or, on occasions, scowling at them, was their way of being very cool. Their appearance was a public affront, and they exploited it to the full.

The status value of this unexpected newsworthiness was not lost on the teds. As Fyvel notes in his book, 'The Insecure Offenders', the wave of rock and roll 'riots' that took place in 1956 appears to have been precipitated largely by an hysterical over-reaction to the uproarious behaviour at the Elephant and Castle's Trocadero Cinema during a showing of Bill Haley's film 'Rock Around The Clock'. The series of similar incidents which occurred in cinemas throughout the world bore an almost carbon-copy similarity to the Elephant and Castle 'riot', just as though

the media had categorically defined and communicated to an eager readership of novice teddy boys the sort of behaviour appropriate for them to indulge in. If 'success' can be measured by results, then the media won an overwhelming victory in its campaign to put the new 'folk devil' on the international map. According to the Times, which for some reason seems to have taken a special interest in the phenomenon, between July 23rd 1956 and October 14th 1959, there were no less than forty-eight rock and roll 'riots' in sixteen countries, including such unlikely locations as Singapore, Norway, Japan (who had their own particular brand of teddy boys, the 'Tayazoku'), Argentina, Denmark, Rhodesia, Persia (Iran), Bulgaria, Siam (Thailand), Indonesia and Czechoslovakia. In Britain, councils up and down the land reacted by imposing bans on the use of dance halls for rock and roll dances cinemas were persuaded not to show 'Rock Around The Clock', juke boxes were banned from cafes, coffee bar licences withdrawn, and school pupils who dared to wear items of teddy boy clothing to school, promptly banned from the premises. Questions were asked in both Houses of Parliament, Parliamentary Committees, penal committees, judicial committees, probation officers, magistrates, psychologists, psychiatrists, criminologists, university dons and churchmen all made reports on the phenomenon. The Archbishop of Canterbury, seeking first hand information, held a private audience with Adam Faith, and a young Jeremy Thorpe, speaking on the Home Service's 'Any Questions', explained to the nation in patronising tones that "rock and roll music (was) simply going to have to be banned if it causes the young people of this country to react in this fashion."⁴⁴ (Fortunately for the 'young people of this country'; Mr. Thorpe's educated drone was unheeded by the powers that be, and rock and roll lived on to outlast his own political career.) Even the 1959 Queen's

Speech made a reference to teddy boys lowering the hitherto high standards of British youth, the Ford Foundation gave a grant to University College London to research the 'psychological cases', the Methodist church hosted a conference on the subject. Lord Baden-Powell proposed an integration of the teddy boys and the boy scouts, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union denounced rock and roll as an 'evil influence on youth'. The Times, as part of its ongoing effort to get to grips with the 'problem' from an intellectual standpoint published a 'searching interview' with one Desmond Turrel, Reading's "Self-Styled King of Teddy Boys". No stone was left unturned in the quest to find out why the youth of Britain had suddenly and inexplicably started to behave like "a bunch of demented dervishes".⁴⁵ The phrase 'juvenile delinquency' was on everybody's lips, from Lil down the caff, to Sir John Hunt who travelled the country delivering earnest lectures on 'the importance of character building' to all who would listen - he had plenty of takers. The establishment was in a turmoil, one minute youth were clean, decent and orderly, doing their National Service and respecting God and the Queen, the next minute they were jiving around in cinema isles, dressing up like pansies, and talking in a way which bore only a passing relation to the language of the bard.

This massive over-reaction to what was little more than a sporadic outbreak of high jinks at cinemas, easily controlled by a few police constables, fanned the flames of the subculture, sustaining its momentum and bringing many more youths into the fray. Fyvel quotes a London social worker who expressed the opinion that:

"(The) excitement and sense of destruction were fed by publicity. The gangs felt that such behaviour was almost expected of them.

"... They began to behave more defiantly, to show off, to be 'big heads', to become what they thought the public wanted them to be - cosh boys. It was as if they were being sucked into violence by something bigger than themselves.

"In other words, press publicity itself sharpened lines of conflict between society and Teddy Boys."⁴⁶

Thus, the escalation of the teddy boy 'problem' was brought about via a process of action and reaction similar to that which marked the expansion and solidification of the biker subculture in the wake of the Hollister 'riot' - the more the media played upon the stereotypical image of the ted, the more rebellious working class youth became. On August bank holiday, 1958, the press got what it wanted, race riots broke out simultaneously in Nottingham, Notting Hill and Shepherd's Bush, with teddy boys playing a prominent part in the fighting. There is however little evidence to suggest that the teds were motivated by overtly racist or political considerations, rather it would appear from contemporary reports that the majority of those involved simply 'went along for the crack'. But it was strongly rumoured at the time, and seems quite likely, that members of Colin Jordan's British Nazi Party had deliberately fomented trouble, infiltrating teddy boy clubs and distributing racist propaganda in coffee bars. The most extraordinary facet of the bank holiday disturbances was the behaviour of Conservative M.P.s who had, up until that point, spent copious amounts of parliamentary time pouring forth venom on the subject

of teddy boys. They now changed course completely and spoke in glowing terms of 'youth's understandable reaction to an alien invasion,' whilst at the same time, calling for a curb on the entry of immigrants into Britain. Its strange how the leopard can be made to change its spots in the interests of political expediency. But, despite this brief reversal, the atmosphere of public condemnation towards the teds was as strong as ever.

The Teds role in the race riots was to be their final large-scale public fling, inevitably, as greater and greater numbers of youths adapted to the style, clothing manufacturers and record companies, with an eye to exploiting this new area of market potential, began to produce teddy boy fashion clothes and synthetic rock and roll suitable for mass consumption - the teds, for all their style, were doomed to extinction. The subculture gradually lost its cohesive force, its main impetus, the distinctive 'uniform' of the teds - drape jacket, skin-tight trousers, boot lace tie and 'brothel creepers' - and its previously 'barbaric' music becoming, if not exactly culturally acceptable, at least tolerable. By the close of the decade, the original rebellious image of the ted was diffuse and dated and, apart from a relative handful of dyed-in-the-wool rockabillies, the subculture had in effect ceased to exist.

"The Teddy Boys in their early large groups, at the height of the vogue, had a fierce sense of being an outcast community. They cultivated this sense, they depended on it, their revolt had its 'esprit de corps' and went with rigid loyalties of members towards each other. However, when large numbers of boys took up the fashion, so that it was no longer easy to tell who was 'a true Teddy Boy' and who was not, the Teddy Boys themselves were no longer a community 'which stood up against society in

loneliness'. As the wearers of the garb became more numerous, the original gang spirit and cohesion was lost, and the large group broke up into smaller groups linked by definite aims." 47

One such group, centred upon a particular form of activity, which emerged out of the ted subculture, and replacing it in the public mind as the new threat to civilised society, was the ton-up boys, the coffee bar cowboys, the motorised maniacs who would belt you with a bike chain as soon as look at you ...

While the teds restricted their nefarious activities to cinemas and dance halls, with the occasional racist attack thrown in for good measure, this new breed of 'juvenile delinquent' was quick to exploit the mobility offered by the motorcycle, venturing beyond the working class communities which spawned it to spread its message for nonconformity in pastures new. The middle classes had lost their geographical isolation, coming, for the first time, face to face with the 'folk devil'. Predictably, to what they saw, they took exception. That spectre, which had previously confronted them at arm's length in the morning paper or on the Radio Newsreel, now mocked them on the streets. It roared defiantly past the family saloon on Sunday afternoon outings, and swaggered its way long the seafront at the popular resorts. It seemed to take an almost childish delight in ridiculing the conventions of 'normal people'. It hunted in packs, made its presence as obtrusive as possible, played its music too loud, had little respect for law and order, and its morals were questionable, to say the very least.

Teds took to bikes naturally and easily. Bikes fitted the

image - the driving beat of rock and roll in motion - and black leather gear looked pretty neat into the bargain. Before too long, anyone young who rode a motorcycle and wore leather jacket and jeans (eminently practical motorcycling gear) posed a threat to the British way of life. It was no longer safe to travel abroad on a bank holiday without being greeted by the disturbing sight and sound of wild young men and women who appeared "too openly to flaunt the work and leisure ethic". In the words of Stan Cohen:

"(These people) symbolised something far more important than what they actually did. They touched the ambivalent nerve through which post-war social change in Britain was experienced. No one wanted depression or austerity, but messages about 'never having had it so good' were ambivalent in that some people were ... (appearing to have) it too good and too quickly ... Resentment and jealousy were easily directed at the young, if only because of their increased spending power and sexual freedom." 48

The desperado-type image fired the imagination of the gentlemen of the press. In their eagerness to outbid each other with 'exclusive' revelations about the ton-up boys, they invented lurid and bloody tales of ritualistic violence and death-defying stunts - for example, the legendary but largely fictitious 'chicken run' in which two rival motorcyclists engaged in mortal combat by riding head-on towards each other, the rider who held his course the longest being declared the victor. In reality, the behaviour of the motorcyclists of the period was, in the main, extremely mild indeed. The majority were more than content to simply spend the evening down the 'caff', in the company of their mates, spinning yarns about the bikes they couldn't afford and the girls they'd never met, except in their

imagination.

Off down to the coast at weekends - Brighton, Margate, Southend, Blackpool, Yarmouth, Scarborough, Rhyl - it didn't matter where, as long as you got away, shared a couple of warm beers with riders from elsewhere, and had a good burn-up all the way there and back again. The roar of a well-tuned engine was capable of transporting its owner to another plane of existence, where the perennial problems of work, home and acne became meaningless. Being in motion was what it was all about.

Tearing down the road at breakneck speed, or just sitting in the steamy warmth of the 'caff', tapping your feet in time to the music, watching your mates flash past the window - it wasn't important how, where or why: you had to keep moving. The nightly races down to the roundabout and back before the record finished on the juke box, the flat-out mass burn-ups along Murder Mile was branded as insanity by the 'outsiders' - those who always knew best what was good for you. But it wasn't insanity. It wasn't a search for death. It was a search for life as much as anything. You were choosing your own way of life, maybe living it very dangerously, but that was your choice, and you would take your chances.

"In England the pivotal skill was not brutality or dancing, but simply fast and dangerous riding ... every London hospital was crowded to overflowing with motorcycle casualties ... In the tangled mass of the road systems, the jungle of glittering signs, the endless hypnotic cat's eyes, the monotonous lanes of traffic, the desolate ... cafeterias, the rockers were a strange and heartening breath of wildness and preserved integrity.

They would come roaring down to London at the weekend in tribes, studs glittering, tangled greasy hair flying out behind them. There was something satisfying about the way in which a traffic stream on a hot Saturday, stalled, crammed with sweaty, pink families trapped with one another as the Mini-Minor was trapped in the queue, could be utterly negated, cancelled by a clump⁴⁹ of gleaming rockers hurtling past them to the roundabout."

Whatever the perceived image of violence and destruction publicly ascribed to the ton-up boys by the media, there is no recorded evidence to show that they, as a group, were involved in any serious disturbances. They contrived to kill and injure themselves in droves on the road, but, in the main, the antisocial side of their characters was restricted to internequine disputes, to fights amongst themselves, far out of the sight of members of the general public. The majority of the population cared not the slightest whether or not they catapulted themselves into early graves, although both Parliament and the road traffic authorities expended many hours of hot air on the subject of the compulsory introduction of crash helmets, passenger insurance, and the need for the raising of the licensing age for motorcycle riding.

In other countries, however, the picture was very different. There, the nascent indigenous motorcycle subcultures became objects of official concern, not because of their proclivity for wild riding, but because they were fast becoming a public nuisance. On the other side of the world, as far back as 1955, long before the 'problem' had hit the shores of Britain, the good burghers of Australasia were already up in arms about the presence of groups of young motorcyclists in the streets. The New Zealand Herald led a vitriolic campaign to draw attention

to the menace. Under the headline 'Rowdy Motorcyclists Told To Leave Camps', a Mr. D. N. Jones, president of the northern branch of the Auckland Motor Camp Proprietors' Association drew attention to the incidence of rowdy motorcyclists upsetting campers and caravanners, delivering dire warnings of the consequences of allowing the problem to remain unchecked. He urged strong action from the authorities against "people who ride motorcycles in groups", adding that, "motorcyclists are often 'nice people", but a menace in groups."⁵⁰

The newspaper mounted a campaign to warn its readers about what it called the 'milk-bar cowboys', who congregated in downtown areas, intimidating passers-by and turning away trade from shops. In the course of a leading feature cataloguing the nuisance caused to business in the Auckland area by the presence of rows of parked motorcycles and their riders, the Herald interviewed a Mr. P. T. Curran, chairman of the Auckland City Council public safety committee who held "strong views about 'milk-bar cowboys' and motorcycles in general. He (felt) that the machines should be restricted to people 'who are given special authority to use them. It could be done in about five years.'

"'I feel this not only because of the nuisance they cause when congregating in the street, but also because they cost so many lives and maim so many young people', said Mr. Curran, 'The motorcycle has been proved a dangerous weapon in irresponsible hands. A local authority can do no more than enforce the law, and it is up to the Government to provide an effective law to control the problem.'"⁵¹

Interestingly enough, in not one of the areas covered by

the survey, did the police consider there to be any more than minor problems involved with parked motorcycles, hardly a situation demanding the introduction of restrictive licences and stringent legislation relating to motorcycle riders.

The 'cowboys' hit back two days later by organising a spectacular demonstration in the centre of the city involving more than fifty motorcyclists, as a protest against police harrassment. A reporter from the Herald covered the event. His account is worth quoting at length because it illustrates both the high degree of opposition to the prescence of the motorcyclists and equally, their own determination to assert their right to a fair deal. Under the headline 'Milk-Bar Cowboys Cause Queen Street Jam', the Herald of January 22nd 1955, described the demonstration in the following words:

"More than fifty 'milk-bar cowboys' on high-powered and expensive motorcycles last night caused a pedestrian traffic jam in Queen Street in the Majestic Theatre block.

"Parking their machines in groups of up to four and parallel to the kerb, they filled more than half the space between Victoria Street and Wellesley Street on both sides.

"People packed the footpath outside the Majestic Theatre eight deep to watch as traffic officers and policemen patrolled along the edge of the parking area. There was almost as big a crowd on the opposite side.

"Questionned as to the motives of the 'cowboys' one youth said he and his friends were 'quite within their rights' and had decided to see 'just what the traffic officers would do'.

"This thing was organised by passing the word around from one to the other', he said. 'I heard about it up the street and decided to come along.'

"One motorcyclist told a group of spectators that the idea had been to fill all the parking spaces between Victoria Street and Wellesley Street, but some cars prevented them from doing this.

"A woman motorist said that when she went to renew her meter fee she was offered £1 by a 'cowboy' for the space her car was occupying. She refused the offer.

"Gathering shortly after 6p.m., the motorcyclists soon attracted the attention of hundreds of late-night shoppers. A few of the 'cowboys' wore the customary peaked cap, flying boots and leather jacket or army greatcoats, and others were more conventionally clad in sports coats and slacks.

"Most of the machines carried ariels and pennants and many of the riders had motifs such as a skull and crossbones painted on the backs of their jackets. Some of the youths had brought along their girlfriends.

"As people thronged outside the theatre it rapidly became hard work to move along the street. One woman fainted from the heat and the exhaust fumes.

"A Fijian Army sergeant, who had been going to the theatre, changed his plans to watch the kerbside show instead. 'I have never seen anything like this', he said. 'They are a lot of hooligans. I would like to have them under me for three months.'

"Motor traffic in the street was at no stage seriously

impeded, but any small incident was greeted by the 'cowboys' with cries and catcalls. When a driver tried to start a stalled car with a crankhandle about a dozen motorcyclists pushed the car until it started.

"Six City Council traffic officers and as many constables continuously patrolled the area alert for any infringements of the laws. A number of motorcyclists were given tickets for overparking and one was booked for having no rear number-plate.

"Traffic Sergeant F. J. Stevens, who was patrolling the area in a car, said he told the motorcyclists shortly after they arrived that they must 'play the game' or they would be in trouble ...

"The 'cowboys' were warned that they would be booked for any offence. 'At first they demurred', said Sergeant Stevens, 'but they soon realised we meant business.'

"It soon became obvious that the youths were 'playing to the gallery'. They stayed as long as the crowd was there to watch them and began to ride off into the night when the shops closed at 9p.m. A few stayed until after the cinema crowds came out.

"Several shopkeepers near the Majestic Theatre said although the presence of the 'cowboys' had affected their evening business, they had not individually caused much trouble."⁵²

A description then of what was probably the very first biker's rights demonstration anywhere in the world, a situation that had all the necessary ingredients for a classic bikers' 'riot' - 'high-powered motorcycles', 'cowboys' with skulls and crossbones on their leather jackets, fainting women, intimidating

'cries and catcalls', cops that 'meant business' - and yet, surprise, surprise, no trouble at all. The New Zealand Herald must have been mightily disappointed at the fizzling out of their big story.

In the United States, however, it was a different story, and a similar demonstration against police harrassment of spectators attending the motorcycle racing at Daytona Beach in Florida, resulted in street riots involving thousands, and the calling out of the National Guard to quell the disturbance. But, in Great Britain, under the leadership of Harold MacMillan, such problems were nonexistent, although judging by the public castigation of its own brand of youthful tearaways, you wouldn't have thought so.

For the ton-up boys, life revolved around the 'caff'. Pubs in those days - and these days - didn't exactly welcome leather jacketed biker riders with open arms. They tended to upset the regular clientele by their very presence, attracted the unwanted attention of the constabulary, and woke up the neighbours at stop-tap. And, when it came to getting their licences renewed, the local magistrates tended not to look too kindly upon landlords who encouraged 'juvenile delinquents' to frequent their premises. The 'caff', on the other hand, was where everything happened. It was warm and inviting and, best of all, it was cheap. With practice, the punters could manage to avoid the watchful eye of the proprietor and make a cup of expresso coffee last an eternity. The time was spent chatting to mates or chatting up the birds who would hang around to cadge a ride. The Ace, Johnsons, the Salt Box, the Nightingale, Chelsea Bridge tea stall, Box Hill - the names were legendary.

Wherever you went there was always someone you knew, someone to talk bikes with. It was magic. And yet, by the time the fifties gave way to the sixties, the impetus had slackened considerably as cars became more accessible to working class youth.

Apart from the factors already mentioned which facilitated the rise of the motorcycle subculture in Britain, of major importance was the fact that this country was the home of the world's motorcycle industry and had a history of involvement with bikes. Just about every family in the land boasted somebody, an uncle, brother, grandfather, cousin or nephew, who had at some point owned a motorcycle, even if it was only used as cheap transport for the daily journey to work and back. The motorcycle had played an important role in the war, large numbers of bikes were produced for the armed forces and saw service in the hands of a host of recruits, previously unfamiliar with the pleasures of life on two wheels. They earnt themselves a special affection in the hearts of servicemen, many of whom carried on riding in civvy street.

The British bike did rather well after the end of the war - a huge number of military machines were released on to the market by one way or another, plus in the austere days of the late forties and early fifties bikes made good sense - cheap to buy and run (petrol being rationed for a lengthy period after the cessation of hostilities), and almost always simple in construction maintenance was a relatively simple do-it-yourself job requiring little more than the most basic of tool kits possessed by every household. The motorcycle was transport for everyman, besides being the transport to ecstasy for teenage ton-up boys, and in the way that bicycles opened up a new world for working class

people at the end of the nineteenth century and in the early years of this century, vastly broadened the horizons of many folk. The post-W.W.II motorcycle gave the ordinary working man the opportunity to travel easily and without restriction. Men and women in hard grey towns could save up their petrol quotas until a sunny Sunday came along, and then venture out into a largely unravished and undisturbed British countryside. A personal mobility of this sort meant that people could travel much greater distances for their work, and thus had a great effect on society. And, as the motorcycle came to be relied upon more and more in the course of daily life, both ergonomically and socially, there arose an intensive and widespread service industry to keep them on the road. Motorcycle parts and accessories shops abounded. Every high street could boast at least one retailer specialising in the sale and repair of motorcycles and their constituent parts.

This being so, there was, when the ton-up boys eventually arrived on the scene, already a thriving motorcycle subculture on the streets of towns and villages throughout the British isles. It was an atmosphere within which its bastard offspring was able to incubate and nurture itself until it had sufficient strength to cut the ties and stand on its own two wheels. All the time there existed a parent motorcycle subculture, it conveyed a stamp of semi-legitimacy even on the most outrageous of ton-up boys. But as soon as cheap and readily available hire-purchase arrived on the scene during the mid to late fifties, many of those older riders who used the motorcycle, purely for reasons of utility, went straight out and bought cheap cars, which kept them dry on the way to work and accommodated the wife, kids, mother-in-law and family pet on weekend trips to the chalet.

With its infrastructure in a state of collapse, the new generation of bike riders was left without a base. They stood out more on the streets, presented a more obvious target for the police, and lost the support of thousands of ex-motorcyclists-turned-car-drivers who previously had championed the cause of all bike riders with enthusiasm. The once massive numbers who thronged the arterial road coffee bars were fast undergoing a process of diffusion; new styles and forms of entertainment opened up alternative avenues of activity. The golden age of the bike 'caff' was dead, killed off by a combination of diverse factors - pubs and clubs, wives and babies, jobs and cars, mortgages and mothers-in-law, higher wages and hire purchase. Slowly but surely, the bike 'caffs' were closing down or going 'up market'. The image and the music were no longer considered 'cool'; a jazzed-up Ford Consul was a far better proposition for pulling the birds than a clapped-out B.S.A. and, in the days when respectable working class parents frowned on 'that sort of thing', offered much greater opportunities for sexual adventure. In 1963, Harry Johnson, the notoriously mean owner of Johnson's Cafe on the A.20, a stone's throw from Brands Hatch, and a stopping off point for motorcyclists from all over the south of England, was ready to put up the shutters for good. His nightly clientele had dwindled to a mere handful of two-wheeled enthusiasts, for whom the motorcycle represented a great deal more than just a passport to instant status. Now, instead of the hundreds-strong bank holiday runs, it was more usual to see small bunches of riders, making their way in twos and threes, quietly and unceremoniously, towards the coast, attracting little more than a passing glance from the general public.

Time had rolled on, the kids had got older, and the music had

changed. Those familiar faces that once thronged the 'caffs' melted away. People made their excuses and simply dropped by the wayside - the spirit had gone out of them. The collapse was inevitable. The bike scene had become cosy and complacent, and was going absolutely nowhere. Nobody was sad about it - it had happened, that's all. What the hell, you couldn't go on living the same way for ever. Some of the boys got married to their steady birds, relegating their bikes to the shed at the bottom of the garden, or saying goodbye to them completely as babies and mortgages came along in rapid succession. Others grudgingly surrendered to the years of subtly applied but abrasive pressure, from parents or employers, to mend their ways before it was too late. After all, you had to earn a living and get on in the world, hadn't you? It was all very well playing Jack the Lad, but it didn't get you anywhere in the long run, did it?

'So why don't you come to your senses boy? These so-called mates of yours ain't gonna stick by you when you're in the shit, are they? Bunch of no-good layabouts, if you ask me. Never done a day's work since they were born. You're worth more than that, luv. Have your hair cut, tidy yourself up, get a nice suit, and we'll think about moving you up off the shop floor. Perhaps a trainee manager's position?'

Not easy to hold out against such arguments when you're nineteen years old and flat broke. These were, after all, just ordinary working class kids struggling to get along in the world. There was no real option; either they could do it the easy way by stepping back into line, or they could do it the hard way and suffer for their sins. Middle class youth could afford to be wayward, the sixties was their decade. Their subcultures were

acceptable, fashionable, new and exciting. But for working class youth the avenues of protest were effectively closed. Sooner or later, they had to succumb to the inevitable steady job, wife and family. Some would slip through the net, but not many. Those who did withstand the pressure, the hardcore of the ton-up boys survived to reassert themselves as the rockers of the early sixties. As Cohen states:

"By 1964 (they) were dying out, but tough with the stubborn bitterness of a group left out of the mainstream of social change. Without the publicity that was given to the initial clashes with the Mods, their weakness would have become more apparent and they would have metamorphosed into another variant of the tougher tradition. Their very nature and origins made their chances of gaining strength autonomously (for example, by attracting new recruits) virtually out of the question."⁵³

Ironically, it was the arrival on the scene of this new species of motorised subculture - the Mods - which put biking in Britain back on its feet with a vengeance.

CHAPTER VI : WE'LL FIGHT THEM ON THE BEACHES

This disc concerns those pouting prima donnas found within the swelling J. Arthur ranks of the sexational psycle sluts. Those nubile nihilists of the North Circular, the lean leonine leatherette lovelies of the Leeds intersection, love to haunt her angels locked in the pagan paradise. No cash, a passion for trash, the tough madonna whose crow magnon face and crab nebular curves haunt the highway of the U.K., whose harsh credo captures the collective libido like lariats, their lips pushed in the neon arc of dodgems. Delightfully disciplined, dumb but deluxe, deliciously deranged, Twin-wheeled existentialists steeped in the sterile excrement of a doomed democracy; whose post-Nietzschean sensibility rejects the bovine gregariousness of a senile oligarchy; whose god is below zero, whose hero is a dead boy condemned to drift like forgotten sputniks in a fool's orbit, bound for a victim's future in the pleasure dromes and ersatz bodega bars of the free world. The mechanicals of love grind like organs of iron to a standstill; hands behind your backs in the noxious gas of cheek to cheek totalitarianism. Hail the psycle sluts! Go, go the Glan Gringos for the gonad age of cunnilingus! the dirty thirty, the naughty forty, the shifty fifty, the filthy five. Zips, clips, whips and chains await for you to arrive. Hells Angels by the busload, stoned stupid, how they strut, smoke Woodbines till they're banjoed and smirk at the Swedish schmut, life on the straight and narrow path drives you off your nut. By day you are a psychopath,, by night you are a psycle slut. On the B.S.A. with two bald tyres, you drove a million miles. You cut your hair, with rusty pliers and you suffer with pillion piles, you get built in obsolescence, travel in your guts, but you don't reach adolescence, slow down you

psycle sluts! Motorcycle Michael wants to buy a tank, only 29 years old and he's learning how to wank. Yesterday he was in the groove, today he's in a rut. My how the movements move, brute fun psycle sluts. See cats on your originals, you peepee on his boots. He makes love like a footballer; he dribbles before he shoots. The goings on at the gang-bang ball made the citizens tut, tut, tut, but what do you care, piss all, you tell 'em, psycle sluts. Boyfriend's burned his jacket, ticket expired, tyres are knackered, knackers are tired. You can tell your tale to the gutter press, get paid to peddle smut. Now you've ridden the road of excess that leads to the psycle slut so you can dine and wine on stuff that's bound to give you boils. Hot dogs direct from Crufts done in the diesel oil or the burger joint around the bend where the meals are fast and skimpy, for you that's how the world could end, not with a bang, but a Wimpy.

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John Cooper Clarke

"I had never actually come up against one at very close quarters, being I suppose what they would call utterly square and old (anyone over twenty-four is old).

"I am square enough to think deck chairs are for sitting in and milk bottles are for milk and have never regarded either of them as offensive weapons ...

"After talking to Terry Gordon yesterday, I realise how uneducated I am.

"Terry kindly took it upon herself to teach me the facts of Mod and Rocker life, and taking the view that you can never learn too much I listened attentively ...

"You've got to be a Mod or a Rocker to mean anything. Mods are neat and clean. They have cropped hair. Rockers have long hair.

"'Rocker boys wear it long and greasy like Elvis Presley, only worse.

"'Mod girls don't wear any make-up - only the eyes and maybe foundation. Rocker girls use a lot of bright pink lipstick and piles of make-up.

"'Mods (both sexes) wear sneakers and tee-shirts with large initials sewn on, maybe their own or U.S.A. ...

"'In the summer we'll wear white pants and so will Mod boys. Bluebeat skirts are out.

"'Rocker girls wear ordinary sweaters and very short tight skirts, dark stockings and winkle-picker shoes.

"'Rocker boys wear leather gear and jeans with studs and fancy boots with heels.

"'Mod girls wear small earrings. Rocker girls wear long dangling ones.

"'Rockers are the minority group: about 25 per cent Rockers to Mods ...

"'(Rockers) have got a different attitude to life. Mods enjoy life. They like to dance. Rockers don't dance.

"'Mods like blues and blue beat rhythm music and they go to clubs and dance. Rockers just listen to pop music ...

"'We drink coke or coffee. Rockers carry knives. Mods don't have weapons ...

"'The Mods want to get rid of the Rockers. We hate and despise them. They can join us if they like ... Or they can leave the country ...

"'We need someone to take notice of us and fighting is a way of attracting attention. The word gets around and it gets exciting and you go where you think the fights are going to be ...'

"Carefully I listened to all this and said I thought I would now be able to tell the difference if I was careless enough to be

spending a week-end at the seaside in a deckchair during a Mod-Rocker invasion.

"It is a pity in a way we can't just hand over a few old deckchairs and a deserted chunk of Brighton beach and seal it off and let them play their ridiculous kids' games so we could snooze in the sun in peace ...

"If it wasn't for the blood and the pills and the broken windows and disturbing peaceful seaside weekends, I'd be in favour of just leaving them alone to fight it out.

"THEY'LL GET AS BORED WITH IT ALL IN THE END AS I AM WITH THEM, ALREADY."⁵⁵

It was precisely this kind of manic over-reaction on the part of the press, admirably documented in Cohen's *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, to what was, in reality, little more than a series of relatively minor seaside skirmishes, that revitalised the ailing motorcycle subculture of the early sixties, rallying thousands upon thousands of teenage recruits to the cause, a cause which, in case they were in any doubt, was daily outlined to them in banner headlines. To have the mods as such a clearly defined opposing force created a new sense of purpose, a new camaraderie, opening up fresh avenues for excitement and exhibitionism. As Buttons, later to achieve notoriety as the president of the London based founding chapter of the Hells Angels, England, explains:

"(Our) gang was ordinary grease, or what most people call Rockers. I wasn't involved enough to be aware of the difference between our group and others, but I soon learned. The Mods were on one side. We, the Rockers were on the other and no one else seemed to matter. The Mods were our automatic enemies and we were theirs. Why it came about, I don't know. It was the accepted

system - our code of ethics, and we lived and breathed for it only."⁵⁶

The rockers, who were as they saw it the genuine article, the only legitimate bearers of a subcultural heritage handed down to them by the ton-up boys of the previous generation, contemptuously dismissed their scooter-riding protagonists as jumped-up posers for whom the two-wheeled lifestyle was no more than a passing fancy, along with purple hearts, blue-beat and bell-bottoms. And, prejudice aside, to a large extent they were quite correct. The public face of a commercially cultivated subculture, born on the tide of a burgeoning and highly remunerative fashion and music industry, the vast majority of acolytes to the mod cause never did have more than an instrumental and often reluctant attachment to their scooters, assuming that is that they aspired to ownership in the first place, viewing them as just another part of the totality of the subcultural ensemble, without which they might be found wanting in the eyes of their peers.

Continental in origin, scooters had been conceived in the immediate post-war years to provide cheap workaday transport for the non-mechanically inclined proletarian, and were imported into Britain in limited numbers from the early 1950s onwards, where they competed badly in every way with the products of the native motorcycle industry. True, they had achieved a minor popularity amongst the sort of middle-aged commuters who required cheap personal transport but considered anything to do with motorcycles or motorcyclists to be anathema, some cities even boasted scooter clubs, but they were generally dismissed as a road-going toy, unworthy of serious consideration. Until that is the precursors of the mod style developed a passion for the 'Italian look' in the summer of 1963, at which point the names Vespa and Lambretta

were catapulted virtually overnight onto the scene as the only form of transport suitable for the style conscious modernist to be seen astride, irrespective of whether or not the individual concerned had the slightest interest in bike riding.

Scooters were slow, noisy, unreliable, bad-handling, and pound for pound gave laughable value when compared with the motorcycles of the day. But with fully enclosed, oil-free engines and front and side panels inviting embellishment, offered massive scope for self-expression to the fashion conscious mod who had already exhausted the limitations of personal adornment and now sought to expand on the theme in new directions. As manufacturers and importers struggled to keep abreast of this wholly unexpected demand for their products, thousands upon thousands of mod kids sporting the already ubiquitous scootering garb of ex-U.S. army parka, wrap-around shades and beret, cajoled their parents into signing hire purchase forms on their behalf, the guarantors presumably heaving a sigh of relief to think that their juvenile offspring were making a sensible choice by not getting mixed up with nasty, oily motorcycles, which everybody knew spelt danger and destruction for those foolish enough to travel that path.

Far too late, the indigenous motorcycle industry realised that they were missing out on this sudden injection of revenue and hastily put on the market a variety of poorly designed, poorly engineered and poorly finished machines which all but destroyed several ailing factories financially and never left the unlucky dealers' showrooms except at hefty, profitless discounts. It was the Italian style which above all sold scooters to British youth, not the particular arrangement of engine, wheels and chassis. Mods were never overly concerned with mechanical efficiency or product longevity, as were the rockers. They took no

delight in getting their well-manicured hands dirty doing rebuilds in the family garage, and any speed approaching seventy miles per hour was of purely academic interest. No, it was the aesthetics of scooter riding which appealed, and it was on this area that they concentrated to great effect.

Even today, some twenty years after the heyday of British scootering, there are few of us old enough to have been around at the time who cannot vividly recall the sight of ranks of chrome-bedecked Vespas festooned with myriad lights, mirrors and tigers' tails, lined up outside the local Wimpy Bar or bowling alley, favourite haunts of their youthful devotees. The rockers called them hairdryers and scorned their lack of performance and manoeuvrability, but the mods didn't care, they weren't into competing in the speed stakes. It wasn't cool. It wasn't part of the image. They reserved their antagonism for the beaches.

Strangely enough, in spite of the widely publicised antipathy between the two camps, aside from the set-piece battles, advertised by the press and stage-managed by the police, daily life was little more violent than before. Of course mods and rockers were deadly enemies, everybody said so, but in the real world the kids who bore the symbols of one or other faction had to coexist without constant aggravation. After all, whatever their choice of subcultural allegiance, they had grown up together on the same housing estates, gone to the same schools and slogged away on the same factory floors day in day out. In reality, away from the flash of the camera, they had peculiarly little interest in each others' affairs, preferring to stick to their own haunts and their own company, studiously avoiding any likelihood of conflict. It was not the physical combat, but the ritual that was all important - to be seen to hate each other

was essential, it kept their respective images as hard men untarnished and their egos intact. Away from the seafront and out of the public gaze, it was much more a war of words, a battle of insults, than a prolonged campaign to wipe each other from the face of the Earth with fists and boots.

Richard Barnes, close friend of the Who and 'official' chronicler of the 'mod experience', recalls the day-to-day life of the period well:

"Most people (he writes) look back on the sixties Mod scene and remember it as a battle between Mods and Rockers. That was because that was the aspect of it presented in the press. Actually there wasn't constant hostility between the two groups. They didn't like each other. Mods thought Rockers were greasy, scruffy, uncouth, out of date, crude and boring idiots. A bunch of leather-clad louts and layabouts. Rockers thought Mods were weedy, dressed up, stuck up, cissified, poncey and effeminate nancies. A bunch of prissy little jerks.

"They didn't, however, waste a lot of time abusing each other or fighting. In lots of places (including London) there were mostly Mods. In the rural areas and more Northern Towns there were mostly Rockers. So they didn't bump into each other too much. I know of Mods that lived in predominantly Rocker areas, and they had to be constantly on the lookout so as not to run into a bunch of Rockers. Ric, who was a Mod in Wembley, moved to East Grinstead - Rocker country. 'I didn't see all that much of them at first because I used to go and stay with friends in London every weekend. If you did have to walk past a group of Rockers, you'd think, "Oh no, here it comes." Not any violence, just plenty of verbal, taking the mickey. It could get really tedious

and embarrassing ...'

"The press reports of the Clacton riots changed a lot of things. After Clacton, Mods and Rockers were suddenly seen as violent hoodlums. Neither side was. There were a few idiots and troublemakers at Clacton called reporters, with not much to do, and not much else to fill the newspapers with ..."⁵⁷

Reading through the newspaper coverage of the period, the impression gained is very different indeed. The 'petty little sawdust Caesars' were headline news and the media made the most of it:

'JAIL THESE WILD ONES - CALL BY MPs'

Daily Mirror, April 1st 1964

'GOTHS BY THE SEA'

London Evening Standard, May 18th 1964

'Marauding army of Vikings going through Europe massacring and plundering, living by slaughter and rapacity ...'

The Sheffield Star, May 18th 1964

'Mutated louts wreaking untold havoc on the land ...'

Time and Tide, May 21st 1964

'MAGISTRATE ORDERS YOUTH TO BE CLEANSED'

The Times, May 19th 1965

The press played their part with all the enthusiasm they could muster and milked every last ounce of lurid and highly dubious copy out of the episode. Murder, rape, pillage, drug abuse - where was it all going to end? When would it be safe for Mum, Dad and Auntie Flo to go back on the beach? It seemed as though the very fabric of society was in imminent danger of collapse.

In a report on the latest round of beach football, the London Evening Standard of July 18th 1964 summed up the situation in the

following words:

"There are two kinds of youth in Britain today. There are those who are winning the admiration of the world by their courageous and disciplined service in the arduous mountain, jungle or desert territory - in Cyprus, on the Yemen border, in Borneo. And there are the Mods and Rockers, with their flick knives."⁵⁸

In the decade following the abolition of National Service, killing was still considered to be an admirable thing for young men to do, providing of course that they did it in defence of the realm, in some corner of a foreign field, out of sight of Mum, Dad and Auntie Flo. Much was made of the contrast between uniformed youth - good, disciplined and acting in the best of British tradition - and youth on the street - bad, undisciplined and challenging all that the country held dear. Questions were asked in the House, parents called to account for their lack of control. Police task forces were set up, ready to roll at the slightest hint of trouble. Bank holiday airlifts were set in motion, work camps prepared and prayers said on the miscreants' behalf. The problem was blamed on affluence, immorality, communism, lack of national pride. Travel agents and deckchair attendants wrung their hands. The country dug in as if for a siege.

In reality, of course, the mods and rockers conflict was spectacular but short-lived. By 1966 the whole thing was rapidly running out of steam. The coastal battles, which once threatened a plunge into national anarchy, had largely disappeared as the combatants became progressively bored with it all. There was still trouble, and much publicised it was too, but the initial momentum had gone, the action nothing more than a mechanical farce.

The game continued to be played, but the players had lost all interest in the result.

"Like the last spurts of a craze or fashion style, the behaviour was often manifested with an exaggerated formalism. There was a conscious attempt to repeat what had been done two or three years before by actors who almost belonged to another generation. The media ... seized on to this behaviour, gave it new names and attempted to elevate it to the Mods and Rockers position. In places like Skegness, Blackpool and Great Yarmouth, the new hooligans were called by the press ... 'Greasers', 'Troggs' or 'Thunderbirds'. But such casting was not successful, even when there was an attempt to make the actors look even worse than the Mods and Rockers (as they in turn) had been made to look worse than the Teddy Boys." 59

Eventually, even the media, resourceful though it undoubtedly was, found itself unable to sustain public interest in mods and rockers and moved on to expose the evil doings of a new variety of folk devil that had arrived on our shores - hippies - which threatened to further outrage and debase public morality.

The conflict with the mods did, however, have an important and lasting effect on the British motorcycle subculture. It attracted a whole new wave of kids on to bikes who, unlike their scooter-riding counterparts, discovered a commitment to life on two wheels which surpassed that of the instrumental or merely fashionable. Once they'd acquired a taste for motorcycling, the original motive behind the selection of that particular form of transport was forgotten and the motorcycle subculture re-emerged in the latter half of the 1960s stronger and more populous than ever before, imbued with a sense of defensive identity born out of three years of struggle and adverse publicity, not to mention

the continually reiterated assertions from the pundits of youth and culture to the effect that the rockers were a walking anachronism in an age which had grown weary of leather and D.A.s.

Probably the most remarkable thing about the entire mods and rockers episode was that it conferred a stamp of legitimacy and permanency on the very group that the experts predicted had lost its appeal to modern youth - the rockers. In fact, it was their opposite number - the once bright new hope for youth, the mods - who could not stand the pace, who abandoned their principles along with their scooters and who split up into a profusion of fresh media-created subcultures - soul boys, rude boys, suedeheads, skinheads etc., etc. In its heyday the 'mod experience' may indeed have been, as arch-mod Pete Townshend asserted in a 1968 interview with Rolling Stone magazine, "the closest thing to patriotism that I've ever felt", but by 1965 the rot was beginning to set in. As Cohen states:

"There were (already) several strands within the Mod scene, and the more extravagant Mods - who were too involved in the whole rhythm and blues camp, Carnaby Street scene, to really 'need' the weekend clashes - began merging into the fashion-conscious hippies and their music began to grow closer to underground sounds. The others were never distinctive enough to maintain any generational continuity."⁶⁰

Richard Barnes sums up the demise of mod a little more eloquently:

"After the second wave of violence, the top Mods began to dissociate themselves from the pillied-up hooligan element. True Mods were really too concerned for their clothes to want to ruin them by fighting with worthless Rockers. The smoother Mods

disapproved of the fighting and thought the others were really Rockers in Mod clothing. They stopped calling themselves Mods and carried on as before as Stylists ...

"By the middle of 1966 the scene had widened and opened out and changed drastically. The Scene had closed; Ready Steady Go had finished and the kids had got bored with rioting at the seaside. Carnaby Street had gone Disney and commercial Mod clubs like Tiles were opening ...

"The rest of the world had caught up and suddenly My Generation had become public property ... The conditions that existed at the beginning of the Sixties had altered. Radio was playing the stuff the kids wanted to hear. Shops were selling the stuff the kids wanted to buy. Kids weren't dancing so much now, they were listening and talking about 'Love'. If you turned off your mind and floated downstream you didn't particularly want to dance (or fight) as well."⁶¹

So, when all is said and done, the mod phenomenon was no more than a phase, a fashion, a hype, which was wholly incapable of sustaining its initial impetus and cohesion. Rockers, on the other hand, were possessed of a far greater tenacity. They had both a history and a future. Inevitably, to ensure survival in a rapidly changing wider social arena, adaptations had to be made, but nevertheless survive they did.

Meanwhile, on the other side of the Atlantic Ocean, a potentially explosive mixture was bubbling in the streets of San Francisco - the freaks of the bike world were resurfacing and consorting with the freaks of the middle class and coalescing within the alternative culture. The 'White Rabbit' was burning rubber along

the highway and 'Up against the wall (any) motherfucker' who stood in his way. The old motorcycle subculture was being swept aside, to be replaced by something unimagined by the British rocker even in his wildest dreams.

CHAPTER VII : FULL CIRCLE - THE WILD ONE IS REBORN IN HAIGHT

ASHBURY

"He rides a road that don't have no end
An open highway without any bends
Tramp and his stallion alone in a dream
Proud in his colours as the chromium gleams

On Iron Horse he'll fly, on Iron Horse he'll gladly die
Iron Horse his wife, Iron Horse his life

He lives his life, he's livin' it fast
Don't try to hide when the dies have been cast
Riding a whirlwind that cuts to the bone
Wasted for ever, ferociously stoned

On Iron Horse he'll fly, on Iron Horse he'll gladly die
Iron Horse his wife, Iron Horse his life

One day, one day they'll go for the sun
Together they'll fly on the eternal run
Wasted for ever on speed, bikes and booze
Yeah, us and the brothers we're all born to lose

On Iron Horse he'll fly, on Iron Horse he'll gladly die
Iron Horse his wife, Iron Horse his life"

Motorhead, 'Iron Horse'62

"We're all outlaws in the eyes of Amerika ...

Jefferson Airplane

"Argggggghhhh - about 3 p.m. they started hearing it.

"It was like a locomotive about ten miles away. It was the
Hells Angels in 'running formation', coming over the mountain on
Harley-Davidson 74s. The Angels were up there somewhere, weaving

down the curves on Route 84, gearing down - thragggggghhhh - and winding up, and the locomotive sound got louder and louder until you couldn't hear yourself talk anymore, or Bob Dylan rheumy and - thraaaaaaaaaagggghhh - here they came round the last curve, the Hells Angels, with the bikes, the beards, the long hair, the sleeveless denim jackets with the death's head insignia and all the rest, looking their most royal rotten, and then one by one they came barrelling in over the wooden bridge up to the front of the house; skidding to a stop in explosions of dust, and it was like a movie or something - each one of the outlaws bouncing and gunning across the bridge with his arms spread out in a tough curve to the handlebars and then skidding to a stop, one after another after another ..."⁶³

Date: Saturday August 7th. 1965. Place: the La Honda ranch of writer and L.S.D. innovator Ken Kesey, San Mateo, California. Occasion: the first 'official' party held by the Merry Pranksters, the deviants of the American drug subculture, for the Hells Angels, the deviants of the motorcycle subculture. This was the day the Angels became the toast of the intellectual hip-community, the day the roughest and craziest of bikers were introduced to the twin delights of acid and free love, as if they needed any lessons in high living. More importantly, it was the day that the outlaw bike culture ceased to be famous (or infamous) simply for smashing up bars in sleepy hick towns and began to achieve a fresh notoriety as the shock troops of the counter culture - mechanised hippies who openly declared love and peace to be a cop-out.

The Pranksters, in their desire to freak out even the freaks, had opened the door to the Angels and, almost immediately, the Angels' image was once again 'cool'. It was as if the ghost of Marvin's Chino had at long last taken his revenge on Brando's

Johnny, stomping him into the ground for good measure. As Tom Wolfe describes it in his chronicle of the times, the Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test:

"The news spread around intellectual-hip circles in the San Francisco-Berkeley area like a legend ... (The Pranksters) had broken through the worst hang-up that intellectuals know, the real-life hang-up. Intellectuals were always hung up with the feeling that they weren't coming to grips with real life. Real life belonged to all those funky spades and prize fighters and bullfighters and dock workers and grape pickers and wetbacks. Nostalgia de la boue. Well, the Hells Angels were real life. It didn't get any realer than that ..."⁶⁴

The outlaws, for their part, had no complaints. From being outcasts even among their fellow motorcyclists, they had suddenly become sought after personalities, courted by writers, religious mystics and political activists, anxious to discover their philosophy of life. They were invited to plush Hollywood parties and befriended by film stars and rock musicians. They no longer had to demand anything by force, it was all freely given - money, drugs, women, and most important of all prestige. By some quirk of nature they had arrived, and their arrival had been noted by working-class bikers and middle-class hippies alike.

Unlike the hippie, however, the outlaw biker was not prepared to passively accept 'fun-loving' citizens' digs about his gender or inquiries about whether or not his mother was a baboon. He fronted out the citizen and said, 'If you don't like what you see - fuck off.' In fact, he deliberately went out of his way to outrage the sensibilities of his detractors, or anybody else who couldn't come to terms with him. As Angela Carter commented at the time:

"Even the biker's clothing (is) the clothing of pure affront, sported to bug the squares ... (and) always succeeds in bugging the squares no matter how often they are warned, 'He only does it to annoy.'

"The ... Californian motorcycle gangs deck themselves with iron crosses, Nazi helmets, necklets and earrings, they grow their hair to their shoulders and dye their beards green, red and purple; they cultivate halitosis and body odour. Perfect dandies of beastliness, they incarnate the American nightmare. Better your sister marry a Negro than have the Oakland chapter of the Hells Angels drop in on her for coffee." 65

And it wasn't just the Hells Angels. Outlaw motorcycle clubs throughout the United States, which had existed in a cultural vacuum since the mid-1950s, harassed by the police and cold-shouldered by the public, once more found themselves an object of interest, in some cases even adulation. Kids just out of high school began to copy their style of dress, donning sleeveless denim jackets and shades, and crudely imitating what they imagined to be their heroes' way of life. The mystique which surrounded these two-wheeled rebels of the Woodstock Nation transcended class barriers. American youth, from the Mexican border all the way to Canada and beyond, took to the highways and byways in search of adventure on beat-up motorcycles. Suddenly you no longer had to be interested in bikes to be a biker - it was the experience, not the nuts and bolts, that was all important. Out there on the road, zapping open the throttle and feeling the surge of power hit you like a methedrine rush, you too could be Sonny Barger or Terry the Tramp. Rebels, after all, didn't need a cause ...

The bike became a kind of drug. Like acid, it assaulted the senses of the user, wrenching him both bodily and mentally from his Earthbound existence. That was what the straights couldn't understand, what the authorities couldn't control. Only those who had shared that experience knew, everybody else could go to hell.

"Outlaws? They were outlaws by choice, from the word go, all the way out in Edge City. Further! The hip world, the vast majority of the acid heads, were still playing the eternal charade of the middle-class intellectuals - Behold my wings! Freedom! Flight! - but you don't actually expect me to jump off that cliff, do you? ... In their heart of hearts, the heads of Haight-Ashbury could never stretch their fantasy as far out as the Hells Angels. Overtly, publicly, they included them in - suddenly, they were the Raw Vital Proles of this thing, the favourite minority, replacing the spades. Privately, the heads remained true to their class, and to its visceral panics ..." 66

On Haight Street the bikers became the policemen of psychedelia. They protected and they prospered. The exploits of their leaders drifted into the folklore of the heads, who respected their upfrontedness whilst at the same time fearing their wrath. It was an unlikely relationship, but nevertheless one from which both groups profitted. The outlaws lived easily and well, and their self-appointed charges were spared the worst excesses of the pushers and the police. When much respected Hells Angels leader Chocolate George lost his life in a bike accident on the way to the Fillmore, thousands of flower children flocked to his funeral and memorial party in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park. The Grateful Dead put on a free concert for the assembled mourners - bikers and hippies united in their grief for a fallen

comrade. Nicholas Von Hoffman, a writer and researcher, recalls the event:

"Henry J. Kaiser, 'the Bay Area Tycoon', as the papers called him, and Chocolate George were buried on the same day. Chocolate George's funeral was more lively ...

"The Berkeley Barb ran a drawing of Chocolate with a halo and a heart. In the article they said the dead Angel in his coffin looked like 'Attila the Hun. A fur cap hides his bare head, shaved when the doctors tried to repair the skull Chocolate broke when he flipped over the handlebars of his Harley.' It was a big affair in a number of Haight-Ashbury circles. Papa Al ... came and so did guys from half a dozen other bike clubs ... the Gypsy Jokers, the Gallop-Geese, and the L.A. Angels (all the way from L.A.)." 67

Even Charles Manson, the Devil himself, was anxious to include the bikers within his grand scheme of things, imagining that when Helter Skelter eventually came down they would rally to his cause and lead his 'dune buggy army', the vanguard of the Family's apocalyptic campaign against the 'piggies'. Fortunately for all concerned, the bikers considered Charlie to be a bit of a joke, and apart from accepting the sexual favours offered to them by Manson's girls, wanted nothing whatever to do with his plans, much to the disappointment of the Los Angeles District Attorney's office and the world's press, hungry to establish a connection between the two groups of 'undesirables'.

But if the Angels were reluctant to go along with Manson's death trip, it wasn't long before they brought matters to a head on their own account, shattering the non-violent illusion of hippiedom once and for ever. The place was Altamount, a small

farming community in New York State; the occasion, a hastily organised and over-hyped free concert to celebrate the successful completion of the Rolling Stone's latest multi-billion dollar tour of America; the catalyst, the violent death of a young black rock fan, Meredith Hunter, at the hands of Angels employed by the Stones as 'stage security'. Accounts vary wildly as to what actually happened during the melee. More often than not, it is the Angels who take the sole blame for the bloody event which brought the Woodstock Nation crashing down. Others maintain that all they were doing was the job they had been employed to do, to protect Jagger from his adoring fans, one of whom, Hunter, drew a gun from his pocket and pointed it at the singer. Whatever the truth, it is quite clear that what took place in front of the stage to the strains of 'Sympathy For The Devil' stunned not only the 300,000 present at the free festival, but sent shock waves reverberating around the country, sending the moths reeling from the flame which they had once found so attractive. As Jagger stood helpless, pathetically appealing for the crowd to 'cool it', the dream of a generation was disintegrating into a bloody nightmare.

To all the complaints that they had been 'over-zealous' in keeping the stage clear, the Angels simply replied that they had only been doing their job.

"Rough? said Frisco Pete. "What I feel the roughness is if we say we're gonna do something, we do it. Do you understand that? That's our whole thing. Now if these people asked us to do this thing, we did it. What are we supposed to do? We ain't cops. We're not into that thing. When we decide to do somethin' it's done, no matter how far we have to go to do it."

"Mick Jagger used us for dupes, man ... We were the biggest

suckers for that idiot I ever can see ..."⁶⁸

Right or wrong, dupes or demagogues, the Angels had gone too far this time. The once adoring heads recoiled in horror and drifted on to different highs, and yet the interest generated by the popularisation of the biker lifestyle did not die. Not everybody could, or wanted to be a Sonny Barger, but armed with a Harley-Davidson and a little imagination they could still head out on the highway looking for adventure. And that was where the movies stepped in ...

CHAPTER VIII : CAPTAIN AMERICA MEETS THE BUCKSKIN KID

Get your motor running
Head out on the highway.
Looking for adventure
And whatever comes our way.
Yeah darling gonna make it happen
Take the world in a love embrace
Fire all of the guns at once
And explode into space.
Like a true nature's child
We were born, born to be wild
Gonna fly so high, never gonna die.
Born to be wild
Born to be wild ...

Steppenwolf, 'Born to be Wild'⁶⁹

It was the release of the film Easy Rider in the summer of 1969 which, more than any other single event, projected the new biker image far beyond the self-constucted boundaries of the Californian outlaw clubs and the San Franciscan heads. Rejected by the financiers of Hollywood as 'uncommercial', the film was a box-office smash, filling cinemas worldwide to capacity, and capturing the hearts and minds of all who reached adolescence during the socially and politically turbulent years of the late 1960s, bikers and non-bikers alike.

The decade had witnessed the release of a whole host of biker-related movies - The Wild Angels, Born Losers, Hells Angels on Wheels, The Glory Stompers, Motor-Psycho - to name but a handful. They all plagiarised the formula adopted so successfully by Stanley Kramer in The Wild One some ten years before. But the

world had moved on; it had all been done before, and done so much better, by Brando and Co.

Easy Rider, which took its title from Southern Californian slang for a prostitute, cost a mere \$575,000 to make, but grossed more than \$20,000,000 for the distributors, Columbia Pictures. It was undoubtedly the road movie of the decade, if not of all time, portraying as it does with a spine-chilling accuracy, the miasma of paranoid brutality that lurks uneasily behind the carefully groomed facade of the Land of the Free. "Why should a film point out morality?" asked Peter Fonda, one of the film's stars. "Kids don't like to be lied to while they're being preached at. The generation gap is less now than it was in my father's day. There's no respect if there's no communication."⁷⁰

Easy Rider opens with our two heroes - Wyatt, played by Peter Fonda in pre-Captain America guise, and his sidekick, Billy, played by the film's director Dennis Hopper - buzzing through the countryside on nondescript dirt-bikes. It soon becomes clear, however, that the two are not simply riding around having a good time, but are really into something far more serious, like pulling off a major cocaine deal and making themselves a whole pile of money in the process. The mood of the film suddenly changes dramatically and a magically transformed Captain America and Billy 'head out on the highway' astride a pair of gleaming Harley-Davidson choppers to the strains of the international anthem of a new generation of bikers, 'Born to be Wild.'

In an instant, the scene is set, and the viewer becomes increasingly aware that what he's watching is far from being 'just another biker movie'. It transpires that their ill-gotten gains are to be used to finance a run to the New Orleans Mardi Gras.

Why? Who knows? We are told nothing of their past, their ideals, their aims or their aspirations. We don't even know where it is that they've come from; we've no option but to go with the flow, to sink our egos into theirs and go along with the trip. The past no longer holds any relevance. It has vanished. All that concerns us now is being in motion - 'looking for adventure and whatever comes our way.'

We travel with Captain America and Billy as they make their way across the heartland of the United States towards their appointed destination. Along the road they meet up with a number of different characters, all engaged to some degree in their own search for the meaning of life, and all destined to fall by the wayside as the travellers journey on. The Mexican family that feeds them, the members of the hippie commune that make love to them - each has its attractions, but there can be no stopping, no detour, no turning back. Whatever lies in store for them they have to meet head-on. They drift into a small town and somehow get involved in a carnival parade, in the process attracting the unwelcome attention of the sheriff's department. Thrown into jail, they encounter a whisky-drinking lawyer named George Hanson, played by Jack Nicholson. George too is an outcast in his own way and decides to go along with them for the ride.

The meeting with George is the key to the whole film. His rebellion is more concrete, more real, than that of the two bikers. He has a history, a purpose, a reason for hating the system, while his companions are nothing more than non-involved drifters, deliberately steering clear of anything that threatens to intrude upon their own narrow definition of freedom. George brings them down to earth: he makes them think about what it is they're doing and why they're doing it. And, predictably, as

soon as they begin to think, the illusion is shattered.

Released from jail, the three of them take off together. George packs behind Fonda, looking incongruous beside the bikers in his white suit and gold football helmet, still clutching a bottle of bourbon. Pulling into a redneck cafe for a bite to eat, they are subjected to a tirade of abuse from the clientele. Later that night, after introducing George to the delights of smoking marijuana, they bed down around the camp fire and are attacked in their sleep by townspeople armed with pick-axe handles. George is brutally clubbed to death, paying the ultimate price for his brief taste of life on the road.

"In the process of exploring the American myth of freedom on the road, the two bikers discover that it is just that - a myth. George, their new friend is touched, too, by the quest for this elusive freedom, but is ... cowardly murdered by mindless conformists, inflicted with the very same disease that killed the American myths of liberty and individuality - paranoia that stems from a fear of freedom." 71

As George himself puts it:

"This used to be a helluva good country. There's a lot of talk about freedom and the individual, but no freedom. Show the people a little individualism and they're terrified ..."72

CHAPTER IX : MOVE OVER MARLON 'CAUSE THE BOYS ARE BACK IN TOWN

"It's a way of life,
how we travel this earth;
the free wind in our face,
a promise from birth.

We ask not
the criticism of man
for our way of life
as we travel this land.

It is our choice,
how we decide to roam
the sea, mountains, desert,
or a concrete-jungle home.

Time has no meaning
as the miles drift into our past;
today, tomorrow, yesterday,
who's first or who's last.

My Harley underneath me,
behind, my lady on the seat;
my brothers beside me,
wind passing under my feet.

For my spirit is free,
I'm a scooter-tramp-heaven bound.
Out of nothing, into the wind,
It's a way of life I've found.

Rocky Morris, A WAY OF LIFE. 73

In Britain too, the late 1960s witnessed a major turning point in the motorcycle subculture. New and challenging possibilities for excitement arose outside the old familiar patterns of life. The age of the hippie had arrived with a vengeance, bringing in its wake a whole plethora of entertaining opinions. Hippies were, for the most part, quiet, passive and creative - on the face of it quite unlike the brash, more aggressive bikers. But for the latter, struggling to keep going in an increasingly hostile environment, the hippie scene was heaven sent. Dope smoking and Country Joe were more than acceptable replacements for light ale and rock'n'roll. Drugs were rebellious and very pleasant into the bargain. Equally pleasant were the new-found delights of 'free love'. Summer weekends were now spent at pop festivals instead of fighting on the beaches, and the phrase 'trips to the coast' was to take on an entirely new meaning. Almost parasitically, the embryonic outlaw biker culture of the late 1960s grew into maturity within the wider hippie subculture, sharing its drugs, its music, its festivals, its squats and its women. British bikers, in common with their American counterparts, soon became an integral part of the hippie way of life, whilst at the same time openly, and sometimes violently abusing their ever-forgiving hosts. But this uneasy and unlikely coalition did contribute in a very material way to the wellbeing of both groups. The bikers defended their non-violent charges against the aggression of straight society, keeping the drug squad off the festival sites and ensuring that the semi-stoned children of the love generation didn't get ripped off by unscrupulous concert promoters or dope dealers. It was a contingent of bikers who banded together with French anarchists to tear down the fences at the Isle of Wight festival, allowing thousands of hippies in to watch the bands for free, much to the chagrin of the organisers

who had hitherto liked to think of themselves as champions of the alternative society. Mike Brake sums up the episode thus:

"The hippies have shown that it can be pleasant to drop out of the arduous job of attempting to steer a difficult, unrewarding society. But when that is done, you leave the driving to the Hell's Angels ..."⁷⁴

British bikers formed themselves into loose-knit clubs, calling themselves by the generic name Hells Angels, the only American outlaws they'd ever heard of, emulating their precursors as best they could by sewing crude facsimiles of the fabled death's head patch on to artificially dirtied sleeveless denim jackets. Things were changing rapidly; old-time rockers - greasers as they had come to be known - were growing their hair, wearing beads around their necks, and eagerly exploring the mind-bending properties of psychedelic drugs. At the same time they still enjoyed the freedom offered by the speeding motorcycle and were careful to distance themselves, if only marginally, from the non-bike riding mass. They eagerly lapped up the stories fed to them by the press about the doings of outlaw bikers in the States. No matter what reality lay behind the media portrayal of this newly discovered breed of bikers, to the kids on the street they were heroes, rebels par excellence. The more the newspapers highlighted and berated their exploits, the more the kids rallied to the flag.

You could take your middle-class radicals, your Tariq Ali's, your Jane Fondas, and stick them. They were no more real than Peter Pan, or for that matter, Karl Marx, and certainly of no more relevance. Working-class kids too wanted to put two fingers up at straight society, but trudging around the streets of London waving Vietcong flags or sitting-in at L.S.F. most

definitely wasn't their idea of how to go about doing it. If they could understand the arguments, they found it impossible to relate to the people making them. Even in the teeth of the revolution, class was still a very formidable hurdle to overcome.

In spite of all the changes experienced in this period, by no means all bikers aspired to the goal of becoming one per centers. The majority of them weren't looking for a head-on clash with the state; they weren't nihilists, they simply wanted to do their own thing and have a good time doing it. But they were stuck in a cultural vacuum, unable to reconcile the apparently polar opposites of roaring around on motorcycles, whilst at the same time living the laid-back lifestyle. After all, the new breed of bikers were only the tip of the iceberg, and British motorcyclists in general hadn't moved on so very far in outlook from the transport caff days of the late 1950s. If anything, since the demise of the mods, there had been a process of retrenchment, an attempt to recapture a 'golden past'. Black leather, greasy D.A. haircuts and rock'n'roll were far from dead, and throughout most of the land were still considered to be the archetypical style of the rebellious biker. (Even today, the media seem to be unable to report any incident concerning people on motorcycles without resorting to the perjorative description 'leather-jacketed youths'.) What was required was a fresh identity which fitted the mood of the moment; an identity more accessible and less demanding than that of the Hells Angel, which the new bike rider could adopt without putting life, livelihood and liberty at risk. As in the United States, it was the release of Easy Rider in the Autumn of 1969 that provided that hitherto elusive identity, banishing the coffee-bar cowboy into exhaust smoke for ever.

I remember the time well. We had all seen the pre-release publicity that appeared in the press for months before the film hit these shores. We knew that it was all about bikes and drugs and, needless to say, we wanted to see it. But not for one single moment did we realise just how significant and lasting an impact it would have on our way of life. It hit us like a bolt between the eyes - hardly twelve months had gone by since the first British screening of what we had all come to regard as the greatest motorcycle movie of all time, The Wild One, and now suddenly all that belonged to the past. The release of Easy Rider, virtually overnight, transformed our idea of what was and what was not conjured up by the term 'biker lifestyle'. I first saw the film (I must have seen it at least a dozen times since) one dreary December evening at the Odeon, Leicester Square. I'd travelled up to London on the train with a couple of greaser mates because my bike was broken down, which was not at all unusual. As we queued for our tickets, the only thought in our minds was whether we ^{would be} rewarded with sufficient doses of sex, violence and drug abuse to justify the quite severe financial outlay on luxurious, red velvet seats that tilted back when you sat in them. It was a pretty peculiar setting in which to watch the tale of sin and savagery that we were expecting. But, as the initial smash-bang image of Steppenwolf's 'Born to be Wild' dissolved into Captain America and Billy's hauntingly surreal search for, or perhaps escape from, the American dream, we were already well and truly hooked. For me, the film would have been a success without any plot or dialogue whatsoever. Just to see the pair of them gunning their Harleys across the screen, wind in their hair, was poetry in itself. Incredible bikes, incredible music, incredible scenery - these were more than enough to impress me beyond words. Thinking back, it occurs to me that the depth of

the sensations probably owed a lot to the dope that we smoked, in copious quantities, throughout the performance. But, whatever the reason for the euphoria, Easy Rider was for us a truly messianic film that quite literally triggered off a thousand ideas in our eager, if slightly stoned, minds. It was like drifting off into another world, a world which we had a desperate desire to experience at first hand. In that single ninety-four minute, budget movie, Dennis Hopper managed to brilliantly encapsulate the very essence of freedom that we had all felt, at one time or another, out there on the road. He presented on the screen a ceremonial vindication of what we'd known all along, but were hopelessly unable to articulate for ourselves. Even the numbing shock of the ending, the pointless deaths, was itself strangely beautiful. It said it all. There could have been no more fitting conclusion. Nothing else could have hammered the message home so effectively. Outlaws didn't have to be swaggering, macho bullies to offer a challenge to the world. All that they had to do was to place themselves beyond the comprehension of 'ordinary' people in order to qualify for summary extermination. Captain America and Billy might be dead and gone, but the challenge had been made, and we were more than ready to take it up. We didn't talk very much as we made our way home on the last train from Charing Cross. We didn't need to, we understood ...

Easy Rider gripped our little world by the neck and shook it around. Nothing was ever the same again. It provided a clarity of image, a style that had up until then been lacking, and it banished everything that had gone before into total obscurity. Black leather jackets and quiffs weren't merely passe, they had become a sick joke. Now, to cut any ice at all, you just had to have that West Coast style - long hair, fringed suede jacket

and shades, a la Dennis Hopper. Looking cool was all-important, and looking cool dictated an entire rearrangement of the subcultural ensemble. Even riding styles were altered to conform to the Easy Rider image. Doing the ton down the bypass, chin on the petrol tank, arse in the air, suddenly lost all its appeal. Instead we rode our bikes along the high street - profiling - feet up and laid back, inviting the citizens to turn their heads and comment as we passed by. In response to which we would remain unmoved, impassive, staring stonily into the distance, seemingly oblivious to all the attention - looking cool. Bikers ceased trying to emulate T.T. racers and instead became street heroes in their own right. The vocabulary changed too - bikes became known as choppers, hogs or simply sets of wheels. Birds became chicks, and fights, rumbles or stompings. It was our very own revolution. The bike scene was still alive and kicking, only now it wore a new set of clothes, spoke a new language, and found new ways to outrage the public.

Nearly twenty years have gone by since Easy Rider spread the bikers' gospel beyond the highways of Southern California and out across the western world. During that time the motorcycle subculture has gone from strength to strength, consolidating itself internally and putting down roots in the unlikeliest of places. It has its own clearly defined style, language and network of formal and informal interconnecting bonds of solidarity which transcend national boundaries and cause considerable concern to governments unused to dealing with deviant subcultures with such well-established transcontinental links. Even behind the Iron Curtain it has its aficionados, its clubs and its choppers. Indeed, Poland boasts one of the oldest and largest Harley-Davidson Riders' Clubs in Europe and regularly hosts gatherings for

foreign riders. In the post-hippie, post-anti-open-air pop festival era biker runs like Daytona and Sturgis in the United States, or Kent in England, attract many thousands of participants; participants with whom the authorities rarely interfere. Outlaw clubs, whose subcultural roots were cast in the very same Southern Californian mould, exist in countries as diverse as New Zealand, and Brazil, Ireland and Japan - the Hells Angels alone have no less than seventy officially chartered constituent chapters in thirteen countries. In America, the federal authorities are so alarmed at the spread that they spend billions of the taxpayers' dollars annually in an attempt to curb its excesses, real or imagined. The longest and most expensive trial in American history resulted in the acquittal of Hells Angels leaders of racketeering charges, and outlaw biker clubs have now become the number one priority target for law enforcement. In Canada, Project Focus gathers data on bikers on a nationwide basis. In West Germany the Hells Angels have been declared an illegal criminal organisation. In New Zealand the government has reacted to its indiginous 'biker problem' by handing out massive grants to keep the participants gainfully employed. Outlaw bikers are headline material the world over, and yet we know so little about the phenomenon. In Part I of this thesis I have attempted to provide the reader with an historical/cultural explanation as to how the subculture evolved and expanded to its present proportions. In Part III I intend to examine the internal workings of the subculture in much greater depth. I very much hope that it will provide the reader with a long awaited insight into what is undoubtedly the most widespread, most long-lived and most misunderstood of all post-war subcultures.

The closing words are those of Hells Angels president Sonny

Barger, who when asked by a New York Times reporter why it was that he was still a Hells Angel at the age of forty-eight replied thus:

"It's something we believe in. I know they can lock me up, and I know they can beat me up and I know they can kill me, but they're not going to change my mind. They're the assholes and I know it. They're mad because I know it ..."⁷⁵

PART TWO

THE OUTLAW LIFESTYLE

CHAPTER X ANGELS FOREVER, FOREVER ANGELS - PROFILE OF AN
OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE CLUB

"The Hells Angels were formed by the Hells Angels: from their early days they have made their own ladder which they use to reach the top. Now that we are on top our banners are what's in the wind. And that is the way it is going to stay because death is already with us. When it comes to anybody else, there is no connection of any kind of scene where we look up to them. If anyone looks up to the scene it is our scene - no matter what is said - this is what is inside of each Hells Angel's mind. As we have said - all on one and one on all. Our scene is forever, forever, this we know. We don't have to believe - we know."76

Freewheelin' Frank H.A.M.C.

The history of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is inextricably linked with the history of the outlaw motorcycle subculture as a whole. It is by far the most prominent of all outlaw motorcycle clubs in the world, with more than seventy constituent chapters in thirteen different countries, and its name has come to be used universally, and quite erroneously, to describe an entire genre of motorcyclists Preoccupied with sexual depravity and mindless violence. In this section I shall set out to explore and hopefully explode, some of the myths associated with the Hells Angels, and lay bare the very rich subcultural lifestyle which those myths serve to obscure. I shall commence by giving a brief synopsis of the history and structural formation of the Hells Angels M.C. England.

My first encounter with the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club England was in 1969, July 29th to be precise, shortly before the London chapter gained permission from their Californian forebears to wear the 'official' winged skull 'deaths head' insignia on

their jackets. It was a hot sunny day in Hyde Park, and the Angels were doing 'security' duty for the Rolling Stones at the open-air memorial concert for the group's late guitarist Brian Jones, recently found drowned as a result of a drugs overdose. As Mick Jagger launched into Sympathy For The Devil, garishly clad in white velvet, leather and gold, gyrating wildly, drums beating, the grimy Angels closed rank across the front of the stage, protecting the guru from his 50,000 adoring fans jammed tight against the barrier. They were being used, and they knew it, and yet they didn't resent it. It was their public debut in England and they played their part to the full whilst the world's press looked on. There was no violence, or if there was I didn't see it, they carried out their allotted task with slick efficiency, moving on whoever got in the way, from the V.I.P.s of the rock world down to the humblest of groupies. Words were seldom necessary, a glance of the eye or a nod of the head from an Angel being quite sufficient to deter even the most ardent of fans. Later, after the crowds had departed, I got into conversation with a couple of members in a nearby pub, chatting about our mutual interest in motorcycles and music, trying to gain some sort of insight into the way they lived and why they wanted to be Hells Angels, hitherto something that I'd only read about in magazines. One of them, a huge, unkempt, tousle-haired individual called Goliath, told me that he was a poet who had hitch-hiked to Istanbul and back, a dedicated hippie until the day he walked into the Arts Lab in Drury Lane and met the Angels. He said he had been searching the world for a cause to latch on to, something he could believe in, dabbling in Eastern religions, using hallucinogenic drugs and living in communes, but had only achieved his goal in the company of the bikers. The Angels were his brothers, his family, and gave him all he needed in life. And what was that I asked -

loyalty, honesty, respect, love, strength, togetherness, the cause he had been seeking. The Hells Angels were his future, their lore his guiding belief, and Sonny Barger, legendary president of the Oakland, California, chapter, his god. He neither needed nor wanted anything more. I wished him well and headed for home, having promised to look him up at the Arts Lab sometime. I wanted to know more about what it was that made the Angels tick.

I turned up there a couple of weeks later on my motorcycle, a very ordinary looking Triumph, and parked up alongside a row of gleaming choppers, the likes of which I'd never set eyes on before. They were, to my untrained eye, ludicrously mishapen, with hugely extended front forks kicking the wheel way out from the frame, high handlebars, tiny petrol tanks, open exhaust pipes and solid rear suspension. Painted obtrusively in weird psychedelic patterns and shining with chromium plate, they resembled no other motorcycle I had ever seen. I remember wondering how on earth anybody could possibly ride them, let alone enjoy the experience. And yet, judging by their coating of road grime, they had covered plenty of miles.

Moving inside, I met Goliath and the rest of his chapter, who welcomed me to the gathering. The Arts Lab played host to a diverse collection of groups and individuals at that time - hippies, squatters, anti-Vietnam activists, anarchists, nuclear disarmers, street musicians, poets, artists, Black and White Panthers, and the London chapter of the Hells Angels who had adopted it as their headquarters. The Angels fitted into the bacchanalian atmosphere perfectly, sporting long hair, beards, beads and tattered denims, they looked little different from the rest of the assembled masses, except for the fact that they kept themselves very much to themselves in a tight-knit group eschewing the company of 'outsiders'. We talked, joked, smoked a few joints

and, pleasantly stoned, talked about their hopes and aspirations. Goliath told me that his chapter were 'going for a charter' (seeking incorporation as a bona fide Hells Angels chapter). There were, he informed me, a number of Hells Angels clubs throughout Britain - West Coast from Bristol, the Druids from Southampton, the Living Dead from Portsmouth, Nightingale from West London, Rattaye from Leicester, Cotswolds, Essex, Birmingham, Kent, Sussex, South and North London, Windsor, Wolverhampton and many others. There were also outlaw motorcycle clubs unrelated and sometimes antagonistic to the Hells Angels - Road Rats, Mofos, South London Nomads, Outlaws, Freewheeling Wessex, Glasgow Blues, Iron Horsemen - all well established in their own right, with their own insignia on their patches, and their own recognised territorial domains. But none of these had yet been awarded the ultimate accolade, official recognition from the American Hells Angels in the form of a charter of incorporation. A high degree of status amongst their subcultural peers would inevitably accrue to the chapter which first obtained that much sought after honour, and there was keen competition in the race to achieve it.

Several Californian Angels had visited London the previous year after getting reports from returning U.S. servicemen that unofficial Hells Angels colours had been seen in the capital. The visit was arranged by a friend of the club, rock musician, political activist and 'Minister of Information' for the U.K. White Panther Party, Mick Farren, who heralded the Angels arrival in the underground newspaper International Times with the following statement:

"The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is the American Dream. They are self-proclaimed outlaws, their creed is one of freedom, of pride, of male domination. They drink, they brawl, they act like the Lords of Creation. Current society is unable to tolerate

the degree of individualism that it takes to become an Angel. The Hells Angels will never be controlled, therefore society asserts, they logically must be destroyed ...

"It is necessary to relate to them in their own terms and hope by stages that a mutual exchange and integration of life styles the Angels may find a deeper philosophy and greater fund of information on which to base their actions, and that the radical in his turn, may learn more of the strong emotional individualistic ties of brotherhood that welds the Angels into such a tight and loyal unit." 77

In fact, the Angels merely used the radicals' cash to finance their trip to Britain and failed to dwell too deeply on the problems of finding a 'deeper philosophy and greater fund of information on which to base their actions'. They stayed in the best hotels, ate in the best restaurants, consumed the best drugs, all at the radicals' expense, and used their time to track down the London Angels. In between, they did their best to bring a touch of humour to their hosts' lives. Richard Neville describes the Angels' underground press conference:

"It was the week before Christmas 1968 and Pete the Coyote, along with other members of San Francisco's Hells Angels had flown to London with his immense gaudy bike to check out the traction (sic). When I met them, they were stacked into a lush little room at the Beatles' Savile Row headquarters, only mildly subdued by George Harrison's efforts to evict them ("He said we ain't got manners.") Ken Kesey had travelled with the Angels and was in the room tape recording the visiting Dutch magician Simon Vinkenoog, now babbling with mellifluous extravagance. Meanwhile, Pete the Coyote was laying it down: 'The cybernetic age entails

a change in our frame of reference, man. The traditional spatio-temporal concepts are inadequate ... the digital computer is easing us into the electronic/automotive age just as the steam engine pivoted us into the industrial revolution. In those days it was gin. It flowed like water. Kids were suckled on it, societies campaigned against it. Now it's acid. L.S.D. is for us what gin was for the Victorians. It lubricates our acceptance of a new age ...' A Hells Angel? With his grim eye shades, weathered leather and stale Levis, he should have been talking about rebuilding his Harley-Davidson or wrenching out some girl's teeth with a pair of rusty pliers ..."⁷⁸

George Harrison may not have been very impressed by the Angels' manners, but their English counterparts certainly enjoyed the show, and became more determined than ever to achieve their goal. Peter Welsh a.k.a. Buttons, president of the London chapter, was invited to America to see for himself how the 'real' Hells Angels operated, and in the spring of 1969 he flew to San Francisco as the representative of his club, pledged to return with the coveted charter. He spent several weeks staying at the Angels' club house in Haight Ashbury, talking with various members and accompanying them on runs and other club activities, a period which he later described as his 'college education'. At the big annual Bass Lake run, attended by all Hells Angels in the United States, he was introduced to the leading club officers, national president Sonny Barger, Tiny, Sweet William, Frisco Bob and Freewheelin' Frank, with whom he discussed the prospect of a London charter. He was told that the matter would be put to a California officers meeting and he would be duly informed of their decision. In the meantime, Buttons travelled around on a borrowed motorcycle getting to know more about the world of the Angels. His biography describes the process:

"I was (he says) shifted from one member's home to another's. This was so we could have an even more personal contact. Nothing was going to be left to chance regarding my application for a charter ...

"I never needed money. The Angels never let me go without the basic necessities and a few luxuries. I know personally some of the members had it rough with an extra mouth to feed and yet no one complained ... This was something I'd never experienced in England. Taking care of your own and letting the rest of the world take care of itself ...

"Life never really maintained any kind of regular pattern. I kept my eyes and ears open. Listening to old stories and tales of brothers who were no longer around was one of my most pleasurable pastimes. I began not only to know but to feel the Hells Angels' history. I was possessing a special brand of unique experiences that were being passed to me by word of mouth like father to son, teacher to pupil.

"Somewhere along the line it was decided that I had finally proved myself 'qualified and fit' in the eyes of everyone in the club and had earned my patch." 79

It was suggested that a Hells Angels England charter should be granted to Buttons to take effect as and when he felt that his chapter were ready for it. Replete in his new patches, Buttons returned to London and set about the task of moulding his fellow Angels into a club worthy of the name.

Today, the Hells Angels M.C. England is without a doubt the most powerful, the most widespread, and most prominent of all British outlaw motorcycle clubs. Since its inception in 1969, the club has gone from strength to strength, and now boasts a

total of ten chapters with a collective membership of approximately two hundred - London (1969), West Coast (1974), Essex (1976), Kent (1976), Wessex (1977), South Coast (1977), Tyne-And-Wear (1979), Windsor (1984), Wolverhampton (1985), Lea Valley (1985) and Ashfield (1986). One other England chapter, Midlands, chartered in 1977, collapsed four years later through dwindling membership. These Hells Angels England chapters, together with their continental counterparts in Germany, Switzerland, Austria, Holland, France, Denmark and Ireland, go to make up the European section of Hells Angels World, of which England has by far the largest number of chapters outside North America. The London chapter, chartered for seventeen years, is the third oldest European charter club after Hells Angels Switzerland and Hells Angels Germany.

As previously mentioned, in the 1960s, there were a whole host of outlaw motorcycle clubs throughout Great Britain who adopted the name Hells Angels and wore their own particular local version of the famed deaths head patch. By far the vast majority of these nascent Hells Angels clubs were however nothing more than loose-knit groups of unregulated and unwashed bikers with little idea and even less interest in what actually constituted an organised Hells Angels chapter. They merely sought, in their own way, to emulate the behaviour of their celluloid 'heroes', the town-wrecking stars of many an imported cheaply made 'B' movie, foisted on to an unsuspecting British public as the authentic face of the Hells Angels. The early clubs simply donned rudimentary colours and proceeded to act out a crude caricature of that which they considered appropriate to the genuine article. The result was, not surprisingly, a complete shambles. There was much in-fighting between chapters and 'pulling patches' (the forcible removal of club colours from the

backs of members of rival clubs) became the order of the day. Before they became chartered and received official American made colours complete with national 'England' bottom rockers, Hells Angels London were merely one club amongst many who chose to call themselves Hells Angels. Having previously enjoyed good relations with the stronger, better established chapters, like Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Nightingale, Windsor, West Coast and Wolverhampton, they now found themselves at odds with their erstwhile comrades. Possession of the England charter carried with it certain obligations, in particular that they were beholden to either bring these unofficial chapters under the England umbrella or force them to disband, if necessary forcibly. Having the charter conferred was only the beginning, getting the other clubs to recognise it's ascendancy was going to prove a very difficult task indeed. As Buttons himself puts it:

"There seemed to be a bitter resentment among some of the biker population towards me. They thought in going to America, I had gone over their heads - or even copped out! It was a part of their game of fantasy to believe they didn't need to be recognised to wear the patch. They believed they were as tough and as righteous as the American brothers. In time I was to come and show them different." 80

In practice however, little happened, barring the occasional minor skirmish whenever the two groups inadvertantly came into contact with each other. In fact, despite Button's fighting words, the total membership of Hells Angels England numbered less than a dozen, whilst that of the so-called 'bogus' clubs ran well into the hundreds. Notwithstanding the publicity surrounding the publication of Buttons's biography, 'Buttons: The Making of a President', in 1971, the newly established England club failed to play a prominent role either within the motorcycle subculture

itself, or in the wider public arena. Instead, the spotlight was shared by two much more powerful clubs, Hells Angels Essex and their arch-enemies the London based Road Rats, leaders of rival alliances, who publicly and bloodily settled their grievances in a pitched battle on Chelsea Bridge later in the same year, leaving one leading Essex member, Peter 'Ginger Pete' Howson, critically injured with shotgun wounds, and resulting in the imprisonment of many others.

It wasn't until mid-1974 the the London chapter made any significant effort to recruit other Hells Angels chapters to the England camp. Early on in that year they successfully concluded negotiations with Hells Angels West Coast who, having themselves recently combined with the ailing Cotswolds chapter, received a charter and donned the official England colours. These two chapters then proceeded to put pressure on the other clubs to follow suit, but met with little success. The aftermath of the Chelsea Bridge debacle had in effect united the most prominent non-England Hells Angels chapters - Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Nightingale, Hattaye, Windsor and Wolverhampton, plus Freewheeling Wessex and the South Coast Druids (now Hells Angels Wessex and Hells Angels South Coast respectively) - into an amalgamation, more widespread and more powerful than the two England chapters. West Coast, who had previously allied themselves with the Amalgamation clubs and switched sides, were eager to justify their decision, and put pressure on London to take the initiative and sort things out. With the assistance of Hells Angels from Germany and Switzerland, they called a make or break meeting and put an ultimatum to the nine Amalgamation chapters - join us or drop your Hells Angels colours and disband. Hosted in Gillingham by the Kent chapter, under a flag of truce, the ensuing meeting was

a fiasco. The Amalgamation completely rejected the England proposal, electing instead to maintain their independence. A war situation now existed between the two groups and the renegade Amalgamation clubs lost no time in setting about the task of building their own independent organisation parallel to the England structure.

Between 1973 and 1975, the Hells Angels Amalgamation grew into a cohesive force which, with the short-lived addition of Hells Angels Yorks, numbered five highly committed chapters holding regular monthly meetings to ensure common policy. A comprehensive list of rules was drawn up relating to the behaviour of constituent chapters and individual members, and they began wearing identical colours, albeit with different regional bottom rockers. Hells Angels Birmingham, unable to stand the pace, disbanded and Nightingale, Battaye, Windsor and Wolverhampton dropped out and went their own ways, apparently unconcerned with the problems of England and their rivals. Although England and the Amalgamation were technically at war during this period - opponents were liable to be 'stomped' and have their colours removed forcibly on sight - there was in fact minimal contact between the two groups, the primary source of conflict for both of them being the Road Rats, a particularly violent club out to prove their ascendancy over the Hells Angels, official or unofficial. This situation was to change suddenly and radically in 1975 when, quite by accident, all three adversaries came face to face at the Watchfield free festival. Following an initial skirmish between the Amalgamation chapters and the Gipsy Warlords (a Warwickshire based outlaw club who later joined the Amalgamation as Hells Angels Midlands), peace talks were held and a temporary trilateral agreement reached between the warring factions.

The following twelve months witnessed a further series of meetings between the Amalgamation, England, and assorted American and European Hells Angels, with the result that in July 1976 the five Amalgamation chapters commenced a minimal prospect period in order to obtain official Hells Angels charters, following a compromise agreement on the wearing of their own colours in the interim. The protracted dispute with the Road Rats, which had resulted in injuries and lost patches on both sides, also came to an end as the clubs increasingly began to associate with one another on a social basis, although deep seated distrust still smoulders under the surface, and trouble is quite likely to break out again in the future.

In the wake of the peace agreement between the Amalgamation and England chapters, a further meeting was arranged in London with the most prominent of the remaining unofficial Hells Angels clubs - Nightingale, Rattaye, Windsor and Wolverhampton. Pressure was put on them to drop their colours and throw in their lot with the now vastly expanded Hells Angels England. Hells Angels Nightingale, who had been active in the West London/Surrey area since the early sixties, declined to surrender their independence and voluntarily disbanded after threats of renewed violence, whilst the other three clubs concerned decided to go it alone and face the consequences. Those consequences were to come to a head three years later in a bitter confrontation between the by now seven England chapters (Tyne-and-Wear having successfully prospected and received an official Hells Angels charter) and the Windsor chapter on Easter Sunday 1979 at Ivy Wood campsite near Brookenhurst, deep in the heart of the normally tranquil New Forest. The trouble flared up in the wake of a series of meetings held under truce in a last ditch attempt to try and

persuade the errant Windsor chapter to follow the example of the Amalgamation clubs and prospect for an England charter. When this course of action proved fruitless, England adopted a different tactic, deciding instead to impose it's will by force. Unfortunately for all concerned, the resulting melee went tragically wrong when one England member armed with a revolver unilaterally undertook to finish off Windsor president Dick Sharman by shooting him several times through the head and chest. This action sparked off a riot in which the rival Angels battled it out with knives, clubs, axes and shotguns. Sharman, although critically injured, lived to tell the tale, with the result that twenty-nine England members were sentenced to terms of imprisonment ranging from six months to fifteen years following a lengthy and expensive trial at Winchester Crown Court in March 1980.

Far from healing the split, the violence only served to harden the attitude of the combatants. The Windsor and Wolverhampton chapters stayed independent, aligned themselves with the Satans Slaves (a large club with several chapters based in South Yorkshire and Devon) and threatened to take revenge on their attackers. Hells Angels Rattaye determined to challenge the England chapters' supremacy and broke away to form the nucleus of the northern alliance of 'red-on-blue' bogus Hells Angels clubs. Hells Angels England, despite having been in existence for over ten years, still failed to unite the British Hells Angels under the same set of colours. It should be borne in mind however that throughout this period of domestic upheaval, Hells Angels England remained an active member of the confederation of European Hells Angels clubs, playing an important part in the creation of new charter clubs, in several different countries. Prior to the merger between the England and Amalgamation chapters, there had been in existence three European chapters - Austria, Germany

(Hamburg), and Switzerland - but these were very soon augmented by others. Firstly, Hells Angels Amsterdam, an old established club and a long standing ally of the Amalgamation, successfully prospected for an official Hells Angels Holland charter, which they received in 1977, followed by a second Dutch chapter, Haarlem, later the same year. Then came Hells Angels Denmark, formerly the Galloping Geoses Copenhagen, together with Stuttgart, Germany in 1978, and the Paris based French club in 1979, boosting the total of chartered Hells Angels chapters in Europe to fifteen (Midlands having been disbanded in 1980.)

In England, however, sporadic violence continued unabated for a further four years until, in 1983, tentative negotiations were opened up between Hells Angels Kent and the Windsor chapter in an effort to secure the latter's cooperation over a planned appeal to the Home Secretary for a review of the case of Kenneth 'Krazy Ken' Littlefield, vice-president of the Wessex chapter, imprisoned for fifteen years as a result of his part in the shooting of Sharman. Initial signs of a reconciliation proved favourable, many Windsor members being sympathetic to Littlefield's plight. It was felt that Sharman, although still chapter president had acted wrongly in breaking the Angels' unwritten rules by giving evidence against his alleged assailant in court, and that it was time to try and make amends. Indeed, it had become apparent that Sharman had, for reasons of his own, perjured himself in the witness box, deliberately pointing the finger of suspicion at Littlefield who vigorously denied the charge of complicity in attempted murder. Despite pressure being put upon him to do so, Sharman staunchly refused to cooperate, with the result that he was suddenly and dramatically deposed from the presidency and thrown out of his club along with the controlling anti-England faction. The way was finally clear for constructive

talks to be held regarding the future of the Windsor chapter. A truce was established, and in December 1983, after five years of bitter conflict, Windsor were admitted to Hells Angels England as a prospect chapter, gaining official recognition some fifteen months later.

This unexpected turn of events had an important effect on the two remaining renegade Hells Angels chapters - Rattaye and Wolverhampton - the former becoming even more firmly committed to the anti-England 'red-on-blue' alliance, whilst the latter, finding themselves completely out in the cold, met with England representatives and decided to follow Windsor's example and prospect for a charter in 1984. They brought with them one of the two Mofos (an old established club with two chapters in Notts. and Lincs.), Sutton-In-Ashfield, as first an England hangaround and later a prospect club.

A mention should be made at this juncture of the two deaths which occurred during an anniversary party thrown by the Windsor chapter at Cookham, Berkshire, in September 1983. At the time, it was widely stated in the media that the dispute was connected with the long running feud between Windsor and Hells Angels England. This was in fact pure speculation, the fight leading to the deaths and a host of serious injuries being entirely due to a spontaneous flare-up between two unconnected outlaw clubs, the Road Rats and the Satans Slaves, neither of whom had ever aspired to becoming Hells Angels. Members of the Windsor chapter did their best to separate the warring clubs and ferry the injured to hospital, but nevertheless, the press continued to ascribe guilt to the Angels. Colin Pratt of the Daily Express, this country's self-proclaimed 'expert' on Angel affairs, maintained that the battle was deliberately engineered by Hells Angels

England in order to rid themselves of 'troublesome' rivals. In a hard-hitting leader he propounded the theory that:

"The Slaves and the Road Rats were invited to a 'peace camp' by the Windsor chapter. But the meeting was set up by the more powerful All England (sic) group - who clearly hoped for a chastening showdown between their troublesome subordinates.

"The barbarous outcome must have exceeded their wildest expectations."⁸¹

In actual fact, nothing could have been further from the truth. The Hells Angels had, and continue to have, little interest in the affairs of other outlaw clubs, except where the activities of such clubs infringe upon the Angels' interests in some way (i.e. if the club concerned was known to be wearing unauthorised Hells Angels colours, or came into material conflict with one or other of the England chapters, in which case all chapters would unite against it). The 'barbarous outcome' of the 'Battle of Cookham Wood', far from causing the Angels to rub their hands with glee, clashed strongly with the Angels' interests in that it drew unwelcome media/police attention to the activities of outlaw motorcycle clubs in general, paving the way for a legal crackdown in which the Angels would inevitably become the premier target. Indeed, they heartily wished that their 'troublesome subordinates' had chosen a far less public way of settling their differences. The Angels themselves have a particularly low opinion of other British outlaw motorcycle clubs extending even to the use of the term 'outlaw' as a derogatory description. Only on very rare occasions, like the Kent Custom Bike Show, do they deign to mix socially with clubs that they regard as their subcultural subordinates, unless a temporary liaison can be seen as being beneficial to their wellbeing in some way. At all other

times they maintain a well rehearsed air of exclusivity, purposely distancing themselves from the affairs of other clubs:

"We don't need to mix with other clubs because we're the best there is. It's as simple as that ... There's a lot of friction one way or another ... Clubs wanting to be Number One. It all boils down to that. It doesn't really matter how hard a club tries it will never get as well known as the Hells Angels. Everyone will always relate bikes to the Angels. We could sit back on our arse for the rest of our lives and we'd still be remembered as Number One ..."

Snake. Hells Angels M.C. Kent

Before I go on to discuss the organisational structure of a typical Hells Angels chapter, I will first explain the role of the previously mentioned 'red-on-blue' alliance of bogus (i.e. unofficial) Hells Angels clubs. This alliance was brought together in the late 1970s, largely as a result of activity on the part of the long established but ailing Hells Angels Rattaye from Leicester who, despising the England chapters and spurned by the more powerful 'outsiders', Windsor and Wolverhampton, decided to form an alliance of minor outlaw clubs throughout the north and east of the country in an attempt to challenge England's supremacy. Mainly, although not exclusively, composed of clubs wearing the Hells Angels death head insignia, the alliance instead opted for red on blue colours as opposed to the traditional Hells Angels red on white, as a gesture of defiance. Whilst at it's peak the alliance boasted more than ten chapters with a total membership of over two hundred individuals, it was generally disorganised with both members and clubs coming and going at will, displaying little of the commitment shown by the rival England clubs. In fact the alliance never constituted a serious

threat to Hells Angels England, and were at best an annoying embarrassment. The wellbeing of the 'red-on-blue' alliance was seriously threatened from 1983 onwards, when Windsor, Wolverhampton and the Mofos decided to throw in their lots with England, thereby establishing a far stronger geographical link between the southern based Hells Angels chapters and their north-eastern ally Tyne-and-Wear. This they could not hope to survive.

The 'red-on-blue' alliance significantly failed to establish itself as authentic in the eyes of the wider subculture. They were seen to be unofficial and lacked the prestige accorded to the England Angels by their peers in the outlaw motorcycling fraternity. They therefore found themselves very much out on a limb, unable to travel far from home singly or in small groups, or attend the obligatory biker events without running the risk of getting stomped and having their colours forcibly removed. Disillusionment set in and, in 1984, Hells Angels Rattaye, founders and lynchpin of the alliance, threw in the towel and surrendered their colours to England. The rest of the alliance rapidly collapsed or changed their club names and colours so as not to cause further offence, the last remaining red on blue bogus Hells Angels chapter, Mortis from Doncaster, being disbanded by the Mofos in October 1985.

It is highly unlikely that a similar oppositional alliance to Hells Angels England will reform in the future, the official England club having a sufficiently strong network of chartered and allied outlaw clubs spread throughout the British Isles to block any such move. The establishment of Angel sponsored events like the Kent Custom Motorcycle Show, the annual focal point of the outlaw subculture, together with the publication in 1983 of the European bike magazine 'Back Street Heroes', combined to

publicly and precisely define what was and what was not a 'proper' Hells Angels club, forever banishing the unofficial would-be Hells Angels to obscurity.

The recognition of Windsor and Wolverhampton as official chartered clubs by Hells Angels England finally restored unity between the older established British Hells Angels chapters. The protracted squabbles leading up to the restoration of peaceful relations has resulted in an extremely introverted attitude amongst the Angels, divorcing them almost entirely from the wider outlaw motorcycle subculture. Virtually the only exception throughout this period of internecine warfare was the appearance on the scene of the Hertfordshire based Madcaps, a small club who aligned themselves closely with the England clubs. They sought to prospect for a charter and were accepted, but found themselves unable to maintain the required six 'full patch' members necessary to qualify as a prospective Hells Angels club. As a result, they disbanded in 1983 and merged with the London chapter as individual Hells Angels prospects. Having achieved their goal of membership, they reformed in 1985 as Hells Angels Lea Valley, bringing the total number of chartered Hells Angels clubs to eleven. It seems unlikely that, apart from the official granting of a Hells Angels Ireland to the prospective Ulster based Armagh club, Hells Angels England will expand any further in the foreseeable future. The larger of the independent outlaw clubs such as the Road Rats, the Satans Slaves or the Chosen Few, who would be considered by the England chapters as eligible for membership, prefer to remain at arms length, building their own organisations apart from the Angels, whilst the smaller clubs, who might aspire to membership, lack the necessary degree of commitment required in a prospective Hells Angels club. The Angels

themselves maintain that they have no inclination towards 'empire building', they have merely undergone a lengthy process of putting their own house in order and that the opening of the door to other outlaw clubs would serve to threaten their elite status within the subculture. Certainly there is no evidence to dispute this, the formal requirements for admission to the Hells Angels as a prospective club precluding virtually all British outlaw clubs from membership.

I now intend to explore the iconography associated with the lifestyle of the outlaw biker, as viewed through the eyes of members of a typical Hells Angels chapter. I shall look at the organisational structure of the club, the decision making process, the 'career' pattern of individual members and their relationship with both the outlaw motorcycle subculture and the wider society, hopefully dispelling a few long held myths along the way.

"I'd honestly have to say it was the glory that got me into the club. The Hells Angels have the name, they're well known. That's what got me in ... You stay in it because of what you experience ... relying on a group of people you can trust. There's never any sort of split, you're 100 per cent for each other ... There's a camaraderie that existed in the war. My father told me how the 'comrade' brothers you meet are closer than your real brothers.

"I'm thirty-two, I came in when I was nineteen. I was one of the youngest members then, and even now there are older members in the club. I can't see myself ever quitting ... I love it too much, the people ..., the friends right around the world. The whole idea of joining the club is to be with people you trust. We don't bother going to pubs very often, it's only inviting trouble, there's a whole lot of people out there who want to be

the fastest gun in the west. We're smart enough to know that the more you hang around with other clubs, the more chance there is of conflict. So we keep ourselves to ourselves ..."

Fagin

What exactly do we mean by the term outlaw motorcycle club? On the one hand, we have the image as defined and publicly advanced by certain law enforcement bodies, most notably the F.B.I., and propagated by the North American media, that contemporary motorcycle clubs represent nothing less than highly sophisticated Mafia-like syndicates dedicated to furthering the financial interests of their membership via excursions into the immensely lucrative field of organised crime - drug manufacture and distribution, protection racketeering, loan sharking, large scale motorcycle theft, the control and operation of massage parlours, topless bars, brothels, and if the West German Minister of Justice is to be believed, white slavery. The big four Stateside clubs - Hells Angels, Outlaws, Bandidos and Pagans - being regarded as akin to the controlling 'families' of the Mafioso. While, on the other hand, we have the equally popular, but totally contradictory image of motorcycle clubs perpetuated by films, novels, and the copy of many a junior leader writer searching for the sensational, as being composed of moronic, filthy, unwashed, indiscriminately violent, sexually depraved individuals, wholly incapable of 'organising' anything beyond the occasional pub brawl or highly publicised gang rape. Thus, we are presented with an interesting and seemingly irreconcilable dichotomy. Organised crime groups or disorganised street gangs, which is the true picture? Or, is the truth perhaps something much more complex?

One thing outlaw motorcycle clubs definitely are not are disorganised juvenile gangs whose members come and go as they

please, unhindered by any form of collective social convention. Apart from the fact that the vast majority of club members would regard the description 'gang' as an extreme form of insult, outlaw motorcycle clubs are in the main highly structured tightly knit groups with formal codes of behaviour and enforceable rules, both written and unwritten, governing the behaviour of their members and ascribing their obligations. Below is a list of the rules regulating the conduct and laying down the individual and collective responsibilities of members of the Hells Angels M.C. England. They are undoubtedly somewhat more comprehensive and more stringent than the rules of many of the smaller outlaw clubs, but are nonetheless generally representative of their type.

RULES OF THE HELLS ANGELS M.C. ENGLAND

1. Minimum prospect period 6 months (since amended to 1 year)
2. Minimum age of prospect shall be 18 (since amended to 21)
3. Minimum size of bike shall be 500 c.c. (since amended to 650 c.c.)
4. An ex-member wishing to re-prospect must wait one year, and then re-apply to his original chapter.
5. Any member leaving the club must have an out date tattooed under a charter tatoo, dishonourably discharged members shall have a half inch cross tatooed over charter tatoo plus out date.
6. No statements to the police.
7. No statements to the press without England approval. (Penalty at discretion of England meeting).
8. No hypes. No use of heroin or morphine unless under medical supervision. (Penalty is automatic expulsion from club).
9. No brother will endanger himself or someone else by senseless actions (Penalty at discretion of England meeting on the seriousness of the offence).

10. Any member fighting another member shall be 'one to one', no weapons shall be used and the fight taken out of harms way. (If possible a neutral referee to be present).
11. No wanton vandalism by members in any place where it has been agreed it must be kept cool. (Penalty same as number 9).
12. No senseless rip-offs on runs. (Penalty same as number 9)
13. Only chartered patch to be worn on the back.
14. A minimum of 2 reps from each club to attend England meeting. Host club allowed 2 reps plus S-A-A. (Penalty at discretion of England meeting).
15. Prospective clubs shall not wear H.A. or red on white.
16. All prospecting clubs shall wear an England bottom rocker of English make.
17. Minimum prospective period for a new charter 1 year plus a minimum of 6 members to form a charter.
18. Each club responsible for its members' payments to England treasury, only members in hospital or jail exempt from payment.
19. All England fines paid to central treasury by clubs concerned.
20. Officers meeting only has the power to fine a club or member for breaking England rules.
21. Office of central treasurer reviewed yearly.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs in Britain are in the main, like their American counterparts, small, tightly knit groups, highly structured and highly visible, with a formalised framework of rules, as well as commonly negotiated informal codes of conduct governing behaviour appropriate to the membership. The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club England, insofar as its individual constituent chapters are concerned, is fairly typical of the type. Chapter membership rarely exceeds twenty males (females being

ineligible for membership), average numbers being around fifteen, a figure directly comparable with other hardcore outlaw motorcycle clubs. Whilst there are larger clubs in this country, with a membership of thirty-five or more, these are rare, and tend to be far less well coordinated. It would appear that the internal structure/decision making process of the archetypical outlaw motorcycle club becomes unwieldy and prone to disintegration if numbers exceed an optimum figure, with the result that the club concerned either dissolves or splits up into two or more chapters, normally on a geographical basis. Indeed, some old established British outlaw clubs controlling large urban areas function quite adequately with a membership of ten or less (six members being the minimum required for the maintenance of a separate Hells Angels charter), managing to command a high degree of respect both within and without the biker subculture.

The average age of members of such clubs is approximately thirty years old, few being under twenty-five and some being well into their forties. Average length of club membership, as far as can be established, is around seven years, although many concerned have previously belonged to one or more other outlaw motorcycle clubs. Some members of Hells Angels England and similar old established clubs have had a membership career which spans more than twenty years. Age does not appear to be a criteria for membership, except perhaps for the fact that outlaw bikers are rarely considered as suitable candidates for membership of such clubs unless their career commitment to the biker lifestyle is well advanced, hence incoming prospects are, in the main, around their mid-twenties, having been bikers for at least eight years or more. The minimum age of acceptance for prospective members of Hells Angels England is twenty-one years, and this is generally

applicable to other well established outlaw motorcycle clubs.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs, far from being the hierarchical organisations of popular mythology, are extremely democratic bodies. Every full patch member has his full say in the process of decision making affecting every aspect of his club's affairs, and is expected to play his part in the day to day running of the club. Passivity is frowned upon, and an extremely high level of individual involvement is required by all members. Nowadays, the offices of club President and Vice-President are largely symbolic. These officers wield no significant power within the club itself, and the individuals concerned have exactly the same status as ordinary members within chapter meetings. However, having said that, although the President and Vice-President are not vested with any substantive formal authority over and above other club members, because those who fill these positions tend to be amongst the most articulate of their peers, they are usually able to put their ideas into practice. This informal power is considerably enhanced by the fact that these officers generally represent their chapter in meetings with other chapters and clubs, and deal with club matters in the wider social arena, acting as public spokesmen on the club's behalf. The remaining chapter officers, namely Sergeant-At-Arms, Secretary and Treasurer, are purely functional positions, ensuring the smooth day to day running of club affairs. Again, the holders of these positions have no specific formal authority over and above that of the rest of the membership, other than that accorded to strictly defined criteria specific to their role.

The Sergeant-At-Arms, the keeper of the outlaw motorcycle club's weaponry in public and police mythology, is in reality nothing of the sort. His role is in fact to take the chair

during chapter meetings, making sure that proceedings are conducted in an orderly fashion, every member being allowed his say on the matter under discussion, and supervising and recording votes when required. In the majority of British clubs the Sergeant-At-Arms has the power to impose previously agreed fines upon disruptive members. In practice this is rarely necessary since peer group disapproval is generally sufficient to deter potential miscreants. A 'successful' Sergeant-At-Arms, in common with any good chairman of meetings, carries out his job with a high degree of tact and diplomacy, seldom being called upon to raise his voice in anger or dish out fines, the proceedings of chapter meetings being regarded with sufficient reverence by the membership to ensure good order throughout.

The Secretary, as his title implies, coordinates the day to day affairs of the chapter, taking minutes in meetings, recording decisions, and communicating with other chapters, clubs and outside bodies on his chapter's behalf. Again, he has no special powers over and above those of ordinary members, and operates solely at the behest of the meeting. Likewise, the Treasurer whose job it is to collect members' weekly subscriptions (subs), administer chapter funds, and give loans to individual members with the chapter's prior approval, is a purely functional position within the outlaw motorcycle club. Every member of the club, including prospects, pays a weekly subscription to the club funds. These, together with monies accruing to the club from other sources - i.e. fines, custom bike shows, the sale of second hand motorcycle parts, fund raising musical events, etc., etc. - go into the chapter's funds and are invested and spent on whatever the membership as a whole sees fit. In the main, chapter subs range from a minimum of £5.00 to as much as £15.00 per member per week, implying a high financial commitment from members to the

club. The accumulated money is used to provide collective facilities for the individual chapter - i.e. the purchase and upkeep of a clubhouse - and also the running expenses of the parent club - i.e. the bulk purchase of club patches, national runs, and legal expenses for members arrested on club business. If an individual falls on hard times or needs money to buy or rebuild his motorcycle he can ask at a weekly chapter meeting for a loan from the club funds. Each case is considered on its merits and, unless he is already in debt to the club, he is usually granted the money, which has to be repaid within a set period plus ten per cent interest. If he fails to meet the deadline he can reapply to the meeting for an extension, which is generally granted. Chapters whose memberships are largely unemployed often resort to the provision of alternative means of fund raising in an attempt to keep the level of subs as low as possible. They sometimes assist members to set themselves up in business selling soft drugs (cannabis and amphetamine sulphate or 'speed') or motorcycle parts. Or, as in the case of Hells Angels Kent and Y Brawdlieth M.C. Cymru, they work collectively to organise and run annual custom bike shows to supplement their income. Members who owe their chapters considerable amounts of money are sometimes disciplined by having their club patches suspended until such time as they've settled up their debt, but rarely, if ever, is a member expelled from a chapter for financial reasons alone.

Occasionally, chapters will elect a sixth officer, the Road Captain, whose role it is to organise club runs, arranging the venue, deciding the route, laying on all necessary facilities - food, beer, music, etc. - and making sure that everyone arrives there in one piece. He has no other official function in the day to day running of the chapter.

Officers are seldom formally elected to their respective positions within the chapter. Individuals are deemed to be suitable candidates for a particular officer's job by their activities within the chapter over a period of time, and are elevated by consensus to that position when the current holder is either removed or steps down of his own volition. In some chapters annual officers elections are held, but here again, there is seldom more than one candidate for each position, the sitting tenant more often than not carrying on with the job. In general, far from aspiring to positions of power, members of outlaw motorcycle clubs do not willingly become officers. The job is seen as being boring, unrewarding, and in some cases, wholly unnecessary. Besides which, in the event of trouble, officers have an unfortunate record of being used as scapegoats for the actions of the club as a whole, and are singled out by the courts for much harsher punishments, it being imagined by both the police and the judiciary that officers of outlaw motorcycle clubs wield supreme power over a sheeplike membership content to follow their every order without question. This picture is in fact very far from the truth, club officers generally being the most rational and least volatile members of the chapter. But, nevertheless, the image of the typical outlaw motorcycle club President as the roughest and toughest member of the chapter who fights his way to the presidency by sheer brute force is still perpetuated, the authorities being seemingly unwilling to recognise the fact that club members can regulate their behaviour without the need for orders from above.

The role of club officers has undoubtedly changed considerably over the years. Little more than a decade ago, it would have been regarded as wholly appropriate for a club President to wield greater power within his chapter, taking decisions on

the chapter's behalf without the prior consultation of the membership, and being largely unanswerable to the meeting for his actions, but these days, power is wielded collectively, the position of President being little more than ceremonial. This change in power relations appears to have come about largely as a result of the advent of authoritative subcultural magazines like Easyriders, written and published by bikers, which exploded many of the myths previously associated with the organisational structure of American outlaw clubs. Before that, the majority of British clubs had relied upon the models of collective behaviour received through the mass media or sixties Hells Angels novels, in whose pages every outlaw club was portrayed in hierarchical terms with the President, flanked by his fellow officers, wielding dictatorial power over a subordinate membership. From the early 1970s onwards, however, there was a progressive rejection of this model by outlaw clubs, the authority of the President being replaced by the authority of the weekly meeting as the sole mechanism of policy making within the club. Although, on paper, five officers - President, Vice-President, Sergeant-At-Arms, Secretary and Treasurer - are a necessary requirement for all clubs applying for an official Hells Angels charter, in practice they are accorded no real power, each full-patch member being regarded as the equal of every other. In fact, the five Hells Angels Amalgamation chapters who joined Hells Angels England in 1976 - 77 had no officers, apart from the purely functional position of Secretary/Treasurer, prior to embarking upon their period of prospectship, when they were pressurised to elect the five obligatory officials. Clubs that continue to cling to the hierarchical authority structure are considered to be a bit of a joke within the subculture as a whole, although the media still appears sure that this is the way that things are run in all outlaw motorcycle clubs.

The Hells Angels M.C. Kent is an outlaw motorcycle club archetypical of the genre. Originally founded in 1969 following the merger of two older Kentish Hells Angels chapters - North-West Kent and the more southerly based Commanches - the club was officially chartered as a constituent member of Hells Angels England in December 1976, after serving a six month prospectship alongside it's former renegade Hells Angels Amalgamation comrades - Essex, Midlands, South Coast and Wessex. With a current membership of seventeen, including two prospective members, Kent is perhaps slightly larger than the average Hells Angels chapter. Many of it's members are in their thirties, a few, notably Fagin the president and Gorilla the sergeant-at-arms, having been associated with the club since it's inception.

The chapter has its headquarters in the Thameside town of Gravesend, where it owns a large commercial property which serves as a club house, incorporating a bar, television, pool and meeting rooms, as well as temporary accommodation for members and guests, and extensive communal garage facilities. Although they use the club house as their base of operations, individual members are widely spread throughout the county and into South-East London. The Angels have been the only outlaw club in Kent for several years, since driving out their last remaining rivals, the Chosen Few, in 1976. The club has a reputation for being extremely well organised and commands great respect in biker circles, mainly as a result of it's ability to run the Kent Custom Bike Show, the premier event of it's kind in Europe. The following interview material was recorded with members of the chapter over a period of three days at the site of the 1984 Kent Custom Bike Show, an annual open-air custom motorcycle show founded by the Angels in 1979 as a public relations exercise in the wake of the New Forest

shooting and now regularly attracts some 15-20,000 outlaw bikers from throughout Britain and the Continent, including many of the largest outlaw motorcycle clubs. Such interviews with bona fide members of the Hells Angels are notoriously difficult to obtain and to schedule in any formal way, club members refusing altogether to discuss their affairs with outsiders, let alone grant recorded interviews which they feel, with some justification, are liable to be used prejudicially against them. This applies particularly to the media who, try as they may, have always received short shrift from the Angels. In fact, the club has a formal rule forbidding any individual member or constituent chapter from making statements to the press, or for that matter sociological researchers. This has often resulted in the past in a very one-sided view of affairs concerning the Hells Angels, and a media presentation which barely scratches the surface of the phenomenon, relying instead upon crude innuendo and the ramblings of self-styled 'experts' who know little or nothing about the subject in hand. Even in my own case, where any interview material secured was guaranteed not for publication, the Angels refused point blank to undergo a formal interview programme, many members being extremely reluctant to commit their views to paper. This reluctance was due in the main, not to unreasoned belligerence, but to the fact that they were totally uninterested whether or not the public at large understood the inner workings of their social world. It wasn't so much a question of how the information obtained might be used against them, but, more particularly, why it needed to be collected at all. They weren't remotely interested in putting themselves 'on show', or explaining their actions to me or anybody else, although as we shall see, once the interviews were under way, trepidation was overcome and they began to open up and voice their opinions on a whole range of matters.

I purposely selected the Kent Custom Bike Show as the setting most likely to get results because, unlike other events of the Angel calendar, it is open to members of the public and the atmosphere is consequently much more relaxed than at Angel only activities like runs, where all outsiders are viewed with suspicion. Also, the Angels, being rightly proud of the show, were more inclined to want to talk about their achievement, and how they felt they were misunderstood by the public and the press. I was obliged therefore to record this series of interviews in a rather unconventional setting, the chaos of the bike show bar. It was, in the circumstances, impossible to refer to the notes I had prepared, outlining what I considered to be the major areas of investigation, as this would have been off-putting to the respondents, and could possibly have led to the curtailment of the interviews. Nor was I able to do any follow-up interviews as individual club members would not consent to solo sessions out of earshot of the group, and it proved impossible to reconstitute the original interview group at a later stage in my research. I have therefore decided to print the interviews at somewhat greater length than was originally intended as I feel that any attempt at abridgement would jeopardise the richness and depth of its overall character. I fully realise that this has led to some repetition of information, but in the circumstances I feel that this is justified.

I should like to commence by giving brief profiles of the six Angels involved:-

Snake

Snake is a well built, well spoken thirty-five year old, who has been a Hells Angel for ten years. He is unmarried and shares a large and much neglected rented house with a group of other

bikers. He has a well paid job, working as a freelance computer programmer and is fully occupied months in advance. He has three A levels acquired at night school and attended a degree course in computers at a polytechnic, which he failed to finish. Nevertheless, Snake is very proud of his educational achievements and fancies himself as something of an academic, much to the amusement of his fellow club members. He was easily the most articulate of the Angels I interviewed, and was anxious to assist in every way possible, being instrumental in obtaining his brothers' cooperation. They, in their turn, were more than happy to allow him to speak on their behalf, evidently trusting him to 'say the right things'. There does appear therefore to be an inordinate amount of time devoted to his views, in comparison with other members of the club who displayed a much greater reticence.

Fagin

Fagin is the club president, a position which he has held for many years. Like Snake, he is one of the more articulate of the group, and was keen to put across the club's point of view. Again, he has had a good education, but unlike Snake who was largely self-motivated, Fagin attended a private school, went on to grammar school, and then did a course at a technical college, where he obtained engineering qualifications. His family background is well-to-do upper middle class, his father being employed in an executive position with a major oil company. Fagin got involved with motorcycles soon after his sixteenth birthday (he is now thirty-two), nurturing an ambition to become a professional moto-cross rider. He joined the Hells Angels in 1971 at the age of nineteen, he says, "as a sort of protest against my parents who wanted me to go to university". Since then he has had a chequered criminal career, culminating in a conviction for riotous assembly in 1979, a result of his involvement in the New Forest riot.

Gipsy

Gipsy is thirty-three years old and unemployed. He makes his living by various means, mostly of dubious legality. But he could in no way be described as a professional criminal, although he has a long string of convictions and has spent several periods behind bars for a number of different offences, including motor-cycle theft, possession and sale of drugs, threatening behaviour, assault, statutory rape, and a whole host of motoring offences. He regards these as an 'occupational hazard', an integral part of his lifestyle with the Angels, and not as criminal activities entered into as ends in themselves. He has been in the club for fourteen years, having previously served for a short while with the armed forces. Public speaking is not Gipsy's forte, and he finds great difficulty in expressing himself in words, resulting in the occasional violent outburst. Raised on a council estate by elderly foster parents, having been rejected at birth by his unmarried mother, Gipsy has had little formal education and is only semi-literate.

Brendan

Brendan is a tall, well built, athletic, outward going and immensely likeable character. Having been an Angel for less than five years, he is a relative newcomer to the club, who has a habit on occasions of upsetting the applecart. Aged twenty-six, he spends his time charging around the country visiting other clubs, 'doing deals' that never quite come off, and getting into trouble. He can be argumentative and aggressive at times, but possesses a charm which gets him out of most scrapes unscathed, although the police take a keen interest in his activities. At the moment he is on bail, awaiting an appearance at the crown court on a serious theft charge which might well result in his

first prison sentence.

Like Gipsy, Brendan comes from an unstable home background. His parents divorced when he was in his early teens and his mother remarried, his father wanting nothing more to do with him. Being unable to see eye to eye with his stepfather, Brendan gave up a promising grammar school career to join the merchant navy at the age of fifteen, and spent the next five years making his own way round the world. Since leaving the navy and joining the Angels, Brendan has started up his own, relatively successful, motorcycle breakers business, which now occupies a small backstreet shop and yard employing three people. He is married to a nurse and is buying his own house in a fashionable village on the outskirts of London. His one great pride and joy is his highly-tuned Harley-Davidson motorcycle, which he rides fast and recklessly. He would very much like to become a competition rider, but lacks the necessary dedication and temperament. It is doubtful whether, despite his new found prosperity and domestic stability, Brendan will ever settle into the role of respectable businessman.

* Since recording the interview, Brendan was found guilty of the theft and export of construction equipment, and sentenced to eighteen months imprisonment. As a consequence of which his business has collapsed and his marriage is on the rocks. He was released on parole in May 1985 and has now left the club.

Gorilla

Gorilla is, as his name suggests, a very broad, immensely powerful man, who prides himself on his physical prowess. He once fought, very successfully, as a semi-professional wrestler, competed in the finals of the British karate championships, from which he was disqualified for biting off an opponents ear, and now works as a doorman-cum-bouncer at a late night discotheque.

Aged thirty-five, he has been an Angel for almost sixteen years and is wholly dedicated to the club. He comes from a poor working class background, was raised by his maternal grandmother, having been rejected by his parents, and has little time for friends or acquaintances outside the Hells Angels, which he regards as his adopted family. Gorilla was expelled from secondary modern school at the age of fourteen, following prolonged periods of truanting, and soon after took to riding motorcycles illegally on the public roads, which quickly brought him into conflict with the police. At fifteen he went to work on a building site and has worked regularly in the construction industry ever since, until being made redundant in February 1984. Married at seventeen to a local girl who was expecting his baby, he now has two children, the eldest having recently left school. He and his wife have subsequently divorced and he is now living with a girlfriend whom he hopes to marry. In spite of his violent past (he has a string of convictions for assault, including several on the police, whom he detests) Gorilla is quietly spoken, friendly and unnervingly polite. He seldom overreacts physically nowadays unless he feels that his club has been slighted in some way. He is semi-literate, but by no means unintelligent, and is a highly skilled, self taught mechanical engineer. He neither drinks nor smokes, preferring the cinema to the pub for recreation. He dresses smartly, goes jogging, keeps reptiles, enjoys foreign travel, and takes a great pride in his collection of meticulously prepared motorcycles and his customised late model Rover V8 car.

Gorilla is a highly respected figure amongst Hells Angels throughout Europe, and is well known at major biker events,

Blue

Blue is in his late twenties and is married with three children. He has been an Angel for thirteen years. He is an officer of the club, vice-president, and devoted much of his time and energy to it's day to day running. He comes from a 'good' family background, his father is a senior Ministry of Defence security policeman, but has never been able to settle to regular employment himself. He has led a chequered criminal career, resulting in four periods of imprisonment, the most recent for five years, following the New Forest disturbance. A semi-skilled mechanic, Blue works irregularly, preferring instead to 'use his wits' in order to make a living. On the face of it a personable man, he suffers periods of self-doubt and depression which can make him moody and unpredictable. He drinks heavily and is inclined to overuse drugs, particularly amphetamines, which tends to exacerbate his moodiness, turning him aggressive and violent. He lives with his family in a multi-storey tower block which, although neat and clean, he sees as a prison and resents. Blue therefore spends the major part of his time away from home, preferring the company of his mates in pubs and clubs, only returning to eat or sleep. Since November 1983, Blue has been diagnosed as having terminal throat cancer, which has led to increased despondency and deeper, more prolonged bouts of depression, and a dependence on drugs which is progressively wrecking his marriage.

* In May 1985, Blue became seriously ill, and despite a series of operations, died in hospital.

I started off by asking them why they thought it was that the name Hells Angels was synonymous in the public mind with the outlaw motorcycle subculture in general:-

Snake:

"I think it's because we've been organised, we've been running, we're much stronger than any other club ... And the fact that we generate more togetherness than other clubs ... It's the thread of continuity over the last thirty years which keeps us going and which puts us in the public eye ... You know I read these things in the newspapers, reports of anti-helmet demos, and it says like five thousand Hells Angels descend on Trafalgar Square ... The press knows it's rubbish, we know it's rubbish, but it's because Hells Angels is a kind of convenient peg to hang nasty motorcyclists on. We're the bad guys and everybody knows it. The truth doesn't seem to matter much one way or the other."

Just how international are the Angels?

Snake:

"We're international. We've got clubs as widespread as America, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil even, and six countries in Europe. We're a truly international brotherhood and we pride ourselves on that internationalism. We come from different countries, we come from different cultures, but we're all Hells Angels. We're all one with each other."

What constitutes that brotherhood? You're not talking about a club, in that you might talk about say the Triumph Motorcycle Owners Club. You're talking about something much more than that - a brotherhood. How do you see that?

Brendan:

"Well, it's a belief in a way of life which isn't so much the things that you do, it's the things that you feel. The

things that you do are just naturally a part of it. It's a religion, in the sense of commitment, not in the biblical sense. And, you know, it's something that goes far beyond bikes and patches and all the rest of it."

Gorilla

"Yeah, there's definitely a very strong feeling ... that's what holds us together. I mean you don't even have to like a guy to have an allegiance to him, because he's in the same club as you ..."

Blue:

"I know that I can go anywhere else in the world, to any other chapter, and know I'm welcome there. And if I've got no money, I know that I've got a roof over my head, food in my belly, and beer, you know. And well, I just can't explain what it's like. It's just like you can go anywhere and you're welcome with open arms."

So what does the club offer you? Loyalty? Fraternity?

Gipsy:

"It's a lot deeper than that. You know it's hard to explain, but ... it goes much further. I mean, say if I was to go to prison, and for instance I had a girlfriend. If I came out (and) she wasn't there, or whatever, I know the club's always gonna be there. That'll be there forever ... It's my family. It's my way of life. It's my lifestyle. If anything else isn't there, this is always there."

Is it like a sort of mutual defence fund?

Gipsy:

"Yes. Yeah we look after our own."

In what way?

Gipsy:

"If say, for one reason or another, someone does end up in prison, the family are looked after or whatever on the outside. They're kept obviously above the poverty line, and kept from actually having a hard time. (It's) made easy for them to get visits, guys visit them in prison, you get all sorts of magazines sent in to you, whatever you want ... You're totally looked after."

On an international basis?

Gipsy:

"Yes. I mean it's er ... It doesn't matter what language you speak or what particular country you come from. I mean, it's not a matter of language at all. It's right down to a strong gut feeling, if you like. You know, it's something that you know inside. If something's that right you know about it."

What is that one thing that you've all got in common? Do you know?

Gipsy:

"I could try and sit here and tell you for a month of Sundays, what it is, or what it means to be a Hells Angel, but I never could. You know, it's a very difficult thing to do. There's a saying that Angels are born and not made."

Snake:

"We constitute the club ..., we are the club. We are the Hells Angels. There is nothing above us that we could say is the club. We made the club ..., we are the club, the men are the club ... And our brotherhood is very strong ... We're very

democratic, we listen to everybody. We come from a variety of backgrounds and we have a variety of skills, and yet we contribute to each other what we can, and we live truly like a family."

Alright, you say that there are a variety of backgrounds, but you take a cartoon, say in the Daily Express, and that would not be so. It would represent a caricature of the Hells Angel.

Snake:

"Sure, sure, you'd get two kinds of things that are put over, particularly in the States. Either we're organised sophisticated criminals that ride around in big cars and only ride bikes because that suits the particular image we're involved in, or else we're kind of brainless morons that drag along from day to day, fill ourselves with drugs every day, spend all our time drinking or out of work, will never get anywhere, have got nothing ... But that's not true."

In either case it's not true?

Snake:

"In either case. And the two don't go together anyway. I mean ... if we was organised criminals we wouldn't ride around on the kind of bikes we do, do the kinds of things we do, wear the kinds of clothes we do. We'd be riding around in ordinary cars, wearing suits ... And we're certainly not morons. The two don't go together. You can't be a sophisticated criminal and a moron at the same time."

Where does all the image come from then?

Snake:

"I guess it's a thing that's built up over a lot of years. I mean we very rarely have had any dealings with the press, or

with the T.V., because we know that whatever we say to them is gonna be distorted ... We've got people who maybe aren't very articulate, who are pulled up and asked all sorts of questions ... It comes across that, yeah, you know, these people are ... a bit daft, or else they indulge in all these kinds of iffy things. People don't know. We're not in the business of going cap in hand to the media and saying, well this is what we think, these are our beliefs, this is how we go about joining our club, this is how we organise ourselves ... That's our business. We don't go down to the local Rotary Club or the local lodge and ask them how they participate with each other. We don't care. But because we don't put that kind of information out to people that we know are going to abuse it anyway ... they conjure up what they like ... I read all sorts of things that purport to give an 'inside view' of not just Hells Angels, but of bike clubs, how people behave, what kinds of things they get up to, what you have to do to prospect, initiation ceremonies ... As far as I'm concerned it's all bullshit ... Why should we open up what we do to people? We're proud of how we behave, of what we do ... We're not interested in telling the world ... what goes on inside of our brotherhood."

Given that that image exists though, you are consciously setting yourselves aside from everybody else. And you're walking into trouble with the rest of society aren't you? Why do you do it?

Snake:

"I guess that there's one thing that I really believe in in this world, and there's not a lot that I believe in, but I don't want to be controlled by anybody. And on the other hand I don't want to control anybody else. I mean my idea of freedom is to mix with people from all kinds of worlds, but we don't put one

on each other. We don't cram ourselves down each other's throats. It's the basic freedom of being an individual. Okay, if that means trouble, if that means bad press, then that's just too bad. Umm, it's not good, but like it happens. And if you want to live a certain way, then it's worth that ..."

Do you not find that that occasionally gets in the way of what you want to do? Does it get in the way of your life?

Snake:

"Well, my life is the Hells Angels ... I do lots of other things. I have lots of friends outside the club. I do things professionally. But when all's said and done, I relate to the Hells Angels until such time that I feel I'm not right for the club, and then I will go elsewhere."

How do you do that? Do you mean that you just retire, just drift away? Is it a sudden process? Or do you just sort of fade from the scene? Do you stop being around?

Snake:

"It depends how people go. I mean, like it gets to the point where people don't want to participate anymore. There is no bad feeling, and they will leave. I mean it's as simple as that. ... We don't control people, we don't programme people, we don't brainwash people. They're with us as long as they're with us in spirit as well as in patch, and like that's it. There's no great mystique ..."

So what sort of people would you say you attracted to your club, in that I'm a motorcycle rider and I'm impressed, so what do I do? Do I fill in a form and come and see you and sign up?

Snake:

"We know people. It's not to say that we've got any great

mental powers that we cast around and say 'Oh yeah, this is like an okay guy. He'll make a good member'. It's not a case of that. It's a case of we lead our lives, and now and again we bump into people, we drink with them, we party with them, we ride bikes with them, and we know if they wanna come into the club. If they don't want to, that's fair enough as well."

Is there anybody who can't?

Snake:

"No"

As a race?

Snake:

"No"

I mean women can't?

Snake:

"There is nothing in our rules about women. True, there aren't any women members, and I would very much doubt whether a woman would come along who was into and qualified for membership. But that isn't to say that one wouldn't come along. It would amaze me if it happened."

Is there a high degree of uniformity? Do you want all your people to think the same way? Or can you remain individuals?

Brendan:

"Not at all. If everybody thought the same way we'd totally stagnate. If you start to get that kind of uniformity then you're gradually going down a road that will taper out into nothing. Differences of opinion, attitude and outlook are a healthy thing in as much as it guarantees growth, expansion and a wider horizon

in general."

Where's the club going for you?

Brendan:

"Further all the time."

In any particular direction?

Brendan:

"It's getting stronger, more permanent, generally more solid. We're getting a bit more respect from people because we're gradually getting over this thing of everyone immediately interpreting us as, you know, troublemaking adolescents, which is how the average member of the public probably visualises us in his own mind. And you know, that in itself probably breaks down barriers for us and enables us to move forward."

What are you doing to improve your public image?

Brendan:

"Well, take this show, it's a classic example. When the first one was staged in 1979 we had a lot of problems with people being considerably concerned about the safety of their property. If they brought their girlfriend along, would she be alright, etc., etc. People come and they look, they see, and they learn that there's another side to the coin. A lot of it is unfortunate because as has already been mentioned, the spin-off from the inaccurate reporting that you tend to get in the press, especially, you know, the cheaper newspapers. It's cheap sensationalism."

You have had a hate relationship with the media throughout. Would you say that it's fuelling the club by it's attentions?

Snake:

"I would have said that as far as we're concerned we generate

our own existence without media stereotyping, without media portrayal of Hells Angels, that we exist and we carry on and we grow. I don't think that that's got anything to do with it at the present time."

You don't deny that bad publicity exists?

Gorilla:

"Oh yeah, I mean we've got a lot of bad publicity over the years, but so do lots of people in different walks of life."

Does it offend you?

Gorilla:

"Bloody right it does. Trouble is there ain't nothing we can do about it is there? I mean we can't really march up to Fleet Street and punch them out can we? Just think how that'd look in the papers ..."

The bad publicity, where does it come from?

Snake:

"Where does it come from? I think a lot of it's lost in the mists of history. But basically it's come from crappy biker movies of the sixties, where the main theme was lots of mindless morons tearing into a town, smashing up people all over the place, stealing what they could, beating up policemen, and driving away on bikes, like a whole series of the fucking things. I mean really very very bad. The quality of the films was awful, never mind the acting."

So there's no truth in any of it then? It's just blown up in the media? You must get up to something to attract the bad publicity.

Snake:

"Oh, of course, I think amongst any group of people who are, I guess, high spirited, and like a bit of freedom, and like to enjoy themselves, friction is created with people. It's unavoidable, you know. But like that happens with anybody, and my guess is that the kind of friction that's created between bikers and the public is far far less than the kind of friction that's created at Millwall football ground on a Saturday afternoon or Southend beach on a bank holiday ... To me it's quite insignificant, but I think in the minds of the public we ride noisy, I guess to them kinda gaudy motorcycles, and we wear patches on our backs, and we're identifiable all the time ... I guess we're not like people who go to football terraces, where during the week they're at home, they're respectable, and then go out at the weekends and have a ruck just for the hell of it. We do what we do all the time. People don't understand us, therefore we're strange, therefore we're frightening, and we're a threat."

You don't deny that you have a potential for violence? What about yourself?

Snake:

"Me? I'm as passive as anything (laughter) ... It seems to me that the way we look, the kind of style of clothing we adopt, I don't think it's meant to terrify people. It's just a kind of free way of life ... I don't give a toss about wearing a collar and a tie, or a suit, it doesn't interest me. I like to run around and do what I want, doing what I'm comfortable in. It's practical. I've got boots, I've got jeans, I ride a bike. It's sensible. The violence thing is ..., I mean it's there, more amongst some brothers than others, but it ain't what it's made

out to be. I don't go walking about the streets armed to the teeth. I carry a knife, I guess most men do, but I don't go around stabbing people all of the time do I? I don't need the aggravation. It's all fucking pointless. If it happens it happens, but I don't go looking for it. If it comes our way we sort it out, but usually people leave us alone. I mean, if I went around the place with a shooter or something, I'd be off down the road in ten minutes, wouldn't I? The old bill would just love that. We get enough stick off them as it is ... You know I see blokes in boozers all the time, and like they've got short hair and ties and all sorts of shit, and they get into a row and shove a broken bottle in somebody's face or something. For no particular reason they'll just up and glass some poor bastard. And yet, they wouldn't get a tug off the old bill on spec, would they? You know what I mean? Okay, we've had our fair share of scraps in the past, some of them serious, but we don't go out beating people up all the time. We don't need to. We've had hassles with dummy H.A. (Hells Angels) clubs and all that, and we pull their patches, but they're not members of the public, they know what they're getting into ..."

Last year there was a big fight between two rival motorcycle clubs in Cookham (Surrey), which resulted in the deaths of two of the participants, and a tremendous amount of bad publicity about the Hells Angels. What do you think about that?

Snake:

"What do I think about it? To put it bluntly, it was one big fuck up ... It didn't do us, or any bikers, any good at all. But it didn't involve any members of the Hells Angels, it didn't involve any bona fide Hells Angels clubs. It was between two other clubs, not Hells Angels, the Roat Rats from London and the

Slaves, (the Satans Slaves from Yorkshire and Devon). Whatever the newspapers and the T.V. had to say, we weren't involved, we weren't even there. Everything they put out about us being involved was lies, it was nothing to do with us. We've learnt over the years from things that have happened in the past. We've made mistakes, and we've learnt. I mean like the New Forest, there was a shooting and we had twenty or thirty guys put away on that. Now we settle our differences in other ways, we've got to. Other clubs, Mickey Mouse clubs haven't learnt that lesson. They stir it all up and we get all the come-backs. I suppose it's inevitable, Hells Angels always looks good in the headlines."

How do the Hells Angels relate to other outlaw motorcycle clubs? Do you get along okay? Or is there friction between you?

Snake:

"Well, that depends, so long as they don't give us any hassle, we don't hassle them, unless of course they're wearing Hells Angels patches unofficially without our say so, and then we have to take action."

What sort of action?

Snake:

"I'd rather not say ... Usually we don't have too much bother with other clubs. Most of them know us and respect us, and come along to the show. If you look round you'll see lots of different patches, different clubs. They come back here year after year and there's never any trouble, never any fighting or anything like that ..."

What's your opinion of those people who wear the insignia when they're not entitled?

Snake:

"Well, I have to say that we don't like it, because we have such a big commitment to our club, that to see somebody else who's gone home and got his mum or his girlfriend to stitch something on his back, and (then) calls himself a Hells Angel, is something that we frown on ... We do whatever we can to discourage it. Which doesn't mean to say that we go around beating the hell out of people. I mean like at the bike show, if we see people come in with a Hells Angels patch of any sort, or a badge, we'll stop them at the gate and we'll have a word with them. They're generally people who know what the score is, and they're people who'll be responsive. In fact, we don't get hardly any of it these days compared with what we used to. But we safeguard the patch through our copyright, and that was because a lot of manufacturers thought it would be a good and a well paying idea if they went out and produced Hells Angels patches and sold them in the shops. And that led to a lot of aggravation for everybody concerned. But now, as I say, with running the show, and with having responsible bike magazines like Easyriders and Back Street Heroes, I mean people get to know and we don't hardly get any of that at all ..."

On a personal level, what for you is the main attraction of the Hells Angels? What aspect of it do you like the most?

Snake:

"I like the togetherness of it. I've got close friends that I would call brothers, who I've been with for years. Um ..., it's basically travelling. I work in an office job, which is kind of an alien environment to me, but I can settle down there and I can work okay. But one of the nice things is going out with my people. We go away on runs at the weekends, we'll go maybe two or three hundred miles and we'll just camp out and have a crack,

and we have a good time. I mean to me there are very few people in this world who are up front enough to be called a brother of mine. They're people who are honest, and that I can rely on, and I can just go out and have a damn good time with. And that to me ... that's it. And the same with the bikes, I'm heavily into motorcycles, customised motorcycles, and to me there's no alternative but to mix with people who are that committed."

On the same track really, you've got a reputation in the media for violence. What do you think about that?

Gorilla:

"Well, yeah, there is a violent element around the club, it's born upon the people we've mixed with over the years ... and the image that the papers have given us. And people try to prove that they're better than us. And obviously you set up a violent breed of men amongst you, to fight this image ... Because it causes you a lot of grief ... And you have to be tough to stand up to it."

Is there any way that being tough has actually done you any good? Have people stayed away from the club? Have they stayed away from you?

Gorilla:

"Oh yeah. I've always maintained like ... I'm not very diplomatic like these other gentlemen (laughter). One good fist is worth a thousand words ..."

Snake:

"I wear my patch everywhere and there are occasions when people will challenge me, or challenge a lot of other guys in the club, and we'll respond ... I speak from a personal level, violence is nothing that I enjoy at all. It's a means of expr-

ession if you like. And there are times when I have to use it. It's not a question of enjoying it, but in the time I've been in the club the violence that I've been involved in has been certainly no greater than before I joined. The situations that we get in ... aren't really situations where we need to beat people up. We've got pubs where we go where we're well respected. We know a lot of people, we don't get into those situations very often. But if people do fuck with us they usually regret it. Because when it does come off, we stick real close together, when we do fight. None of your Queensberry rules or anything like that, we don't fight fair we fight to win. It's all on one or one on all. That's the way it's got to be, we've got no other option have we? If one of our guys goes into a pub and somebody starts taking the piss out of the patch, he's got to retaliate. And usually, when he does, about half a dozen upstanding citizens give him a kicking for it. They don't fight fair with us, so why should we fight fair with them. We don't hardly ever fight amongst ourselves at all, that's because we have too much respect for each other, and respect for the patch. It's a pity that alot of other people outside the club haven't got that same sort of respect."

Do you find that wen you're walking down the street people turn round and point your patch out? Do they give you any hassle?

Gorilla:

"No, not really, not in our area. Not at all. You know like, everybody accepts us for what we are. We leave them alone, they leave us alone."

The image projected in the media always groups bikers together with everything else that's got a delinquent label, but it seems

to me there's a difference. I mean, say punks, skinheads, mods, whatever, those are sort of phases that people go through when they're young, fifteen to twenty years old or something like that. The biker thing may start in that range, but you're all over twenty. Why does it go on? Why do you still ...?

Gorilla:

"Well it's just the way of life you adopt. You know, if you start off on a path you enjoy walking along, then you carry on walking down it don't you? It's just a way of life I enjoy, so I just keep on as long as I can."

Would you compare the club with anything else? I mean, like the freemasons or anything?

Fagin:

"Yeah, that's the common one to bring up. Everybody ... The biggest relationship between Hells Angels and any other society anyone can think of, they automatically think of the freemasons. And, I imagine that that is probably only one of the good comparisons that you can make. The only other sort of comparison that you can make is perhaps with organisations that I wouldn't like to be associated with ..., the P.L.O. and things like that, which we are nothing to do with because we are totally a nonpolitical organisation ..."

The Angels have often been compared to the Mafia or something like that. I mean it's quite an exclusive sort of club. It's not that easy to get in is it?

Snake:

"No, no ... We don't think it should be easy to get into ... As far as we're concerned it's not a question of secrecy or exclusivity, it's not a question of us drawing a veil over activ-

ities that we don't wish to be made public. I mean, we run this bike show every year, which is a big annual biker event which attracts sort of ten, eleven, twelve thousand people, and everybody can come and see what we do. I think it's just that we like to meet and we like to conduct our own affairs amongst our own people, just like everybody else. I mean, if I was to barge into a Womens Institute meeting and demand to know what they're doing and why, they would quite rightly have the same sort of attitude."

There's been all sorts of stuff written, as you obviously know, about the ritual you have to go through to get accepted into the club.

Snake:

"Yeah, yeah ... (laughter)."

Things like fighting and the proverbial biting the heads off live chickens (more laughter). I have to ask if that's true.

Snake:

"No it's not, it's just rubbish ... I think the thing is that we consider, and in some ways things might be our own fault for not being outward going, but we consider that we've had a pretty raw deal off the media over the years, and they said a whole lot of things about us simply because for a long time we just weren't prepared to talk to them. Because whatever we said was distorted and messed around with, and they had this idea, God knows where it came from, initiation rituals, people pissing all over each other ... I mean I'm thirty-five, you know, I'm not going to walk into a room and sort of throw buckets of shit over anybody who's just got a patch. If we vote somebody into the club we respect them and we'll respect the patch, and the last thing we're going to do is make complete idiots of ourselves ..."

So what do you actually need to become a Hells Angel?

Snake:

"I think it's like anything else in life, it's a question of having the right attitude. Our people are people who ride motorcycles pretty well all of the time ... They're people who have just got more of an interest than riding a motorcycle to work. It's kind of an abiding love for them. We build them ourselves, we go off on runs in this country and abroad, we mix with a lot of other people outside the club, but people who are equally in tune with bikes. And it's our commitment to the brotherhood, to a sharing with other people, and the more we enjoy it. To me it's very close, I mean almost like a family, which isn't to say that I'm not independent and an individual and I can't go out and do whatever else I do, but there is a kind of closeness there, and to me that's important."

Are there rules and regulations within the club which govern your behaviour?

Snake:

"Yes, we have certain minimum rules which revolve around the way we conduct the club, and they are minimum rules because there's absolutely no way that we want to restrict the freedom of our members. We want to preserve the freedom as much as we can of the individual members of our club. Our rules are only about the conduct of our club. We don't have rules that make people go out and commit various acts which are liable to endanger them or anybody else. We're close, but we're still very much individuals ... We don't need too many rules because we have such a strong, sort of moral code amongst ourselves. It's a code of honour ... We give out honesty to each other and we expect honesty in return. I don't think that exists anywhere

else in the world ..."

How do most Angels live? Or people in motorcycle clubs in general? Do they all live on the streets? Or do they all have regular jobs?

Snake:

"Well, a lot of our people live in semi-detached houses (laughter). I mean, if you took any other group of a hundred people and said how do all these people live, anybody ... There would be a wide variety of the way those people live. We've got guys who own their own houses. And we've got guys who do various jobs, from owning bike shops, like Fagin, to a guy in my club who's a silversmith at Hatton Garden ... People do various things, we've got one guy who's a chemist and works for the Ministry of Defence, and all sorts of jobs. And then again, we've got lorry drivers, and a lot of people who are out of work, as a lot of other people are these days. But most people in the club, I would say, are skilled at one particular thing ... We've got a lot of extremely bright people in the club who hold down very good jobs. Not at all what you'd expect. We have different ways of making a living, but they don't get in the way of us being Hells Angels. That is our life. Angels forever, forever Angels."

Looking around here, there's a great preoccupation with gothic images, death images, skulls, Franzetta images ... Why? Why this great display of immortality?

Snake:

"I'm not preoccupied with death. I mean I love life, yeah. I enjoy it. I get a great crack out of life, and I think that most people here do. The public looks at it and they say, these

people have all got a death wish. But it's not true. You go back to the fifties and you've got the ton-up boys, people strewing themselves up the road ... murder mile, chicken runs, people getting round the roundabout and back before the record finishes on the juke box ... Everyone had the idea that these people were just on their toes ready to kill themselves. But it's not true, I mean these people were riding their bikes and living their lives. Okay, they were probably doing it very dangerously, but it's not a search, or it wasn't a search for death, it's a search for life as much as anything. And the imagery I guess is to say to people well, shit, we live our lives the way we want to. We don't care about death. But because we don't care about death doesn't mean to say that we don't like living ..."

The club breaks down into chapters geographically? By regions?

Fagin:

"Not so much by regions, but just by virtue of them being different clubs. Because you might have one region that has a lot of clubs in it, like the bay area in San Francisco, which must have something like twelve clubs in that area, whereas we would only have one club in an area that size in England."

Where are you concentrated in England? I don't see many Angels around at all.

Fagin:

"Because it's hard to become a member of the Hells Angels, there aren't that many Hells Angels. There are plenty of people going around who call themselves Hells Angels, and you read about hundreds of Hells Angels in the newspaper, but that's just people who newspapers call Hells Angels ... The actual number

of Hells Angels in the country isn't that many, probably under two hundred."

What's your attitude to these people who impersonate you?

Fagin:

"Hmmm ... slightly annoying (laughter), irritating. But it depends on what sort of class you'd put these imposters in, if you like to put it that way. I mean some people do it just out of ignorance, they don't know any better. And then you've got the other class of people who perhaps do it just to be annoying."

Do some people do it for a profit, printing and selling books, T-shirts and the like?

Fagin:

"Oh yes. I mean there's a good commercial basis behind it ... We had 'Support Your Local Hells Angels' T-shirts printed to raise funds, and the next thing we knew was that the Co-Op in Southampton was selling them. It just goes to show how people jump on the bandwagon when they see a profit to be made."

The club objected?

Fagin:

"Yes we did. And they stopped selling them in the end. But you get other people who sell these little enamel badges with Hells Angels on them, and you get hundreds of people around wearing these little badges."

Why do you object to that?

Fagin:

"Because it's the use of the name to make money."

Can you take any action legally to stop this?

Fagin:

"There's a copyright in the States and there's a copyright here as well. Hells Angels is in fact a limited trademark. The company Hells Angels Ltd. was set up, which we're all shareholders of by virtue of our membership."

Is the centre patch copyright?

Fagin:

"That's right. The words Hells Angels and the death's head which we actually wear on our back is a registered trademark, it's patented."

Is there not a danger with events like this (the Kent Custom Bike Show) and things like that (the sale of Support Your Local Hells Angels T-shirts and stickers), that commercialism can be taken too far? Could the money side destroy the club?

Fagin:

"I don't know about the money side of it actually destroying the club ... You refer to making money?"

Yeah, whenever you make money and you get rich, doesn't that become an end in itself?

Fagin:

"I don't think so because we're committed that much within the Hells Angels that we do need a lot of money to be able to live up to our own commitments, by sending people here, there and everywhere, by sending people abroad, defence funds for court cases, looking after people, things like that ..."

Do you travel frequently? Do your people go abroad and make contact with other clubs? Do their people come here frequently?

Gipsy:

"Yeah we travel. Obviously we travel. I mean, as you've seen, we've got brothers from abroad at this show. We'll go and visit them. We'll party with them abroad, we'll party over here."

Is that paid out of club funds?

Gipsy:

"Yeah. Obviously the reason for club funds is to help us out. You know, I mean, if some guy has a bad week, if you ride along the road and lose your wallet, and you've lost all your money, I mean obviously you'll turn round and say 'Bloody hell I'm a bit stuck at the moment because of this'. So obviously you're helped out, you're looked after. It works all the way round."

So it's best if the club strikes it rich?

Gipsy:

"No. It's not based on profit making, of being commercial. ... For instance, the show, it's not here to make money ... Obviously, it takes a lot of work and a lot of money for us to put it on. But what it is is to get people to understand that what we are and what we're about is not what's gone down in the press. All the bad publicity and bad stuff that comes out, it's not true you know. I mean obviously you're gonna get a sort of report that X amount of Hells Angels are doing something, and they're not. They're not actually Hells Angels. So obviously we can't turn round and run up to the nearest bloke and threaten him and say, 'Well look you're wrong', and try and put him right. So we're trying to put it right this way, and show people that people can come to the show. They don't have to be a biker, they can be a vicar, a policeman, anything. They're welcome here."

That's what the weekend's for, so they can get to understand us a bit, and have a good time. And see what, not just us are about, but bikers in general ... A little bit of understanding would probably go a long way for a lot of people. You know, if they only take it off the newspaper coverage, etc... Because, you know, bad news always sells more newspapers. Obviously, if someone gets hit on the head, you're gonna get a situation that is bad news, so it'll sell papers. But, if you're helping an old lady across the road it doesn't sell papers."

How important are things like clothes and music to the Angels?

Snake:

"Well, that's a strange thing, because if you actually look at some of the members in the club, apart from the fact that they wear a patch on their backs, they're quite smartly dressed. And you get other guys who are just pretty greasy, not because it's any big deal to deliberately make themselves greasy, but because sartorial convention isn't their big thing in life ... And as far as music ... I don't really know, I mean the one thing that we're not ever so much into is this kind of conventional studded leather jacket heavy metal thing. And although, having said that, probably Motorhead are the closest people to us. Not because we go round and bang our heads, but just because they're good people. Our musical tastes vary. I mean I can sit in the evening and listen to Wagner and I quite get into it, you know (laughter). And other people like other things. There's no kind of ... It's like biking in general, I mean you've got your fashion thing and you've got your music thing, you've got the mods and the heavy metal people and a whole lot of other things, and the punks, but I don't think there's any one kind of music which I could say either people in the club identify with, or

people who ride bikes in general."

Finally, why do you think it is that people like yourselves join motorcycle clubs? What is the attraction of motorcycle clubs in general? Is it worth all the bother involved?

Snake:

"I think it's for the same reason that anybody who's a complete nut about something, like a total enthusiast, will want to get together with a fellow enthusiast. I mean you get it with anglers even ... You go out in the summer, and in the winter, and you see rows and rows of people with rods waving over rivers and canals, and you can't imagine why they do it. And if you asked them why, I guess a lot of them couldn't even tell you. But it's a great togetherness, a great enthusiasm. It's a kind of common bond that revolved around a particular hobby or something, which in this case is motorcycling. And motorcycling, being a kind of mobile activity, people go and they kind of ride around together, and they travel far afield and meet people with similar interests. I think the attraction to a club is that if you don't actually belong to a bike club you don't get in on any of that kind of action. I mean you can just ride around on your own all summer and only ever meet up with other people by accident. But being in a club you've actually got people on hand every day who share your life's interests, and that's kind of a great thing. There is trouble ... (but) I think you adapt to it really. Rather than go out and go in pubs where you're not going to get served ..., I mean you can tell by most pubs that they aren't going to serve you anyway, even before you go through the door, so you just adapt to it and go to the pub where you will get served. It's just a matter of not causing friction yourself. Once you start causing your own friction then you're just gonna wire yourself up and not

enjoy it. You know I don't care if anybody hates me. As long as they understand me and then hate me. That's all I ask ..."

CHAPTER XI THE CAREER PATTERN OF A TYPICAL OUTLAW MOTORCYCLE

CLUB MEMBER

There is a distinct career pattern to the life of an outlaw motorcycle club member. The Hells Angels in common with the majority of well established clubs will not accept prospective members under the age of twenty-one, although a few more minor and less well organised clubs will take prospects from eighteen upwards, and it is extremely unusual for bikers to approach a club with a view to membership until they have reached their mid to late twenties and, in some cases, their early thirties. The reason for this is that prospective members must demonstrate by the way that they conduct themselves generally within the wider motorcycle subculture, that they are possessed of the various qualities necessary to make a good club member. This entails a lengthy period of familiarity with the subculture in order that the initiate attains the level of involvement whereby he is considered to be a likely candidate for acceptance.

The process of becoming a full-patch member of an outlaw motorcycle club is infinitely more complex than the formal criteria for membership would suggest. It is not simply a matter of a would be member approaching the club of his choice and making a request to be allowed to prospect, access if negotiated over a period of time and involves a whole series of participation in both formal and informal activities with club members before he is deemed to have the character and ability to make the grade as a prospect. The qualities required in such a person are far from clearly defined. The individual has to be seen to be independent and able to take care of himself, and yet at the same time he must be prepared to accord due respect to the club and display an ability to adapt to the norms of the group. But nevertheless,

potential membership material is generally recognised at a relatively early stage in the process, the individual concerned being encouraged to participate socially with club members in non-formal activities - drinking, riding, non-membership 'party nights' at the clubhouse, etc - and actively discouraged from socialising with others outside the club. There are rarely any half measures, the tightly controlled social milieu of the group does not tolerate interference from 'outsiders', normally referred to in a derogatory fashion as 'wallies'. This is not to say that club members don't have close friends and associates amongst non-club members, many have a wide ranging social/professional involvement outside the club. But, because such acquaintances are not aspiring towards membership, they are not regarded as having any great bearing on the collective affairs of the club. Very few established friends ever make the transition to prospecting, they may well be experienced and avid bikers, but have no desire to join up. Potential prospects however are regarded in a different light. It is often said within outlaw motorcycle clubs that such individuals can be recognised as potential members well before they are even considered as official candidates for prospecting. There is a feeling, a bond, a rapport, between that individual and the group, something indefinable in any material sense, but nevertheless something which is strongly felt by all concerned. An individual may be an outlaw biker for years and yet never display the slightest interest in joining a club, but there is a recognisable and growing minority for whom the biker subculture represents something greater than a passing attachment to motorcycles as a means of transportation, or even a passionate hobby. For those few, who we may term 'lifestyle bikers', the commitment to the subculture is total. They regard membership of an outlaw club as being the apex of this lifestyle.

and such membership represents a desirable goal. In order to attain this goal the aspirant adopts a particular career pattern within the subculture calculated to open up an avenue of access to the desired goal. There is therefore a very well understood and steady progression from novice biker to outlaw club member. Individuals who choose to follow this course quickly and consciously adopt the various traits and nuances particular to the hardcore end of the subcultural spectrum. For instance, they will cultivate the distinctive appearance associated with outlaw club members, i.e. the wearing of a denim or leather cut-off sporting identifiable symbols, together with a biker T-shirt, bandana, single earring, rings and tattoos, etc. They are also likely to grow their hair long and cultivate a beard, and carry a buck knife on their belt, primarily for a symbolic purpose rather than for use as a tool or a weapon. Unlike other subcultural fashions, outlaw biker apparel has altered little during the past twenty years, thus the 'right' image is clearly defined. What is considered to be 'cool' and what is not is easily learned during the initial apprenticeship period, both from direct experience and from widely read subcultural magazines, such as Easyriders or Iron Horse in the U.S.A. and Back Street Heroes in Britain. The adoption of this very specific subcultural style immediately sets the subject apart from the 'straight' motorcyclist, who is apt to blame him for society's low opinion of motorcycling, reinforcing his loyalty to his chosen group, and placing him more concretely within the outlaw category. Such individuals are however still far removed from the world of the outlaw club member. It is not simply a question of dress, aspirants still have to acquire the necessary material and social skills which will elevate them to a position within the subculture where they may be considered to be eligible for membership. A major route of

of access revolves around the applicant's ability to build custom motorcycles or 'choppers', handbuilt machines much beloved by outlaw bikers. He simply cannot go out and buy himself a ticket by purchasing a brand new machine off the production line, he is expected to show his commitment by constructing his own bike. In order to do this, the individual is obliged to frequent custom shops and other social settings where he comes into regular contact with outlaw bikers higher up the career scale, including club members, and learns, via a process of action and reaction, forms of appropriate behaviour. He gradually surrounds himself with the trappings of outlaw life and in the process moves on up the subcultural ladder. His social world tends to revolve more and more around biker events, providing a greater knowledge of, and acceptance from, those whom he wishes to emulate. It is a gradual assimilation, but one with quite recognisable steps. Some never make it beyond the martorial level, finding themselves unable or unwilling to accept ^{the} vagaries of the lifestyle. Others simply can't afford or can't build a decent bike, and are frowned on as being not proper bikers or 'wannabes'. They are seen as lacking the degree of commitment necessary to graduate to the ranks of the one-percenters, who would do most things, legal or illegal, to get a decent 'set of wheels' on the road. Many fall by the wayside as they discover just how all-consuming the lifestyle of an outlaw biker is, and content themselves with the pursuit of motorcycling as a hobby. Those who persevere in serving their apprenticeship soon discover that being a biker is virtually a full time occupation. They drink in pubs frequented by bikers, hang around custom shops, trade parts and skills with each other, and spend their weekends on runs, at custom shows, or on anti-helmet demonstrations. Their commitment is made

stronger because of the large amounts of time and money which have to be sacrificed towards achieving their goal.

Because the majority of motorcyclists are over the age of eighteen before they pass their driving test and become eligible to ride motorcycles of more than 125 c.c., they are therefore virtually out of their teens before they are in a position to even decide whether or not to go beyond the transport/recreational stage and affect the style of the biker subculture. Thus, although the numbers involved vis-a-vis motorcycle riders as a whole are small, they do not regard subcultural membership as a passing teenage phase, in the way that becoming a skinhead or a punk rocker might be viewed. We are not dealing here with a youth culture centred around fashion or music, in which the participants come and go at will, displaying varying degrees of commitment in the process, from mild interest through to passionate dedication. We are talking about a subculture with fixed parameters, in which the participants, in order to become accepted by their subcultural peers, must actively involve themselves to a high degree, virtually excluding all other pursuits. Added to that, are the attendant practical barriers associated with becoming a lifestyle biker - i.e. the cost. Large capacity motorcycles are extremely expensive to buy and maintain, and building a chopper from imported American or homemade parts is well out of the reach of all but the most well paid or most dedicated bikers. Fortunately, for those who are accepted into the outlaw world, there is a ready supply of secondhand or stolen parts available for trade or the exchange of associated skills and services, such as welding, spraying, chroming etc. Nonetheless, the financial burden of subcultural membership is still high, not only as far as the building and running of the

bike is concerned, but also attendant expenses, such as the insurance premiums, clothing, and the cost of long distance travelling and socialising. This means that the majority of those involved are well into their twenties before they are in a material position to participate fully in the subculture. They have to earn enough money to support their career, which necessitates having either a well paid job or an alternative source of income. This 'alternative source of income' more often than not involves forms of illegality specific to the subculture itself. They may steal 'straight' bikes and cannabalise them for parts, or rebuild them into legal frames and sell them, or they may deal in drugs widely used in the biker subculture, such as cannabis or amphetamine sulphate (speed). There are however quite strict internal codes which govern such activities. Hard drugs are totally unacceptable and those who deal in them or use them are ostracised. Likewise, it is frowned upon to 'steal from your own', and anyone caught selling stolen chopper parts is likely to get 'visited'. It is considered okay to steal standard production bikes from those outside the subculture, but not to steal from each other. Many survive simply by exchanging or selling their skills, both bike-related and otherwise. Some will take up tattooing, printing T-shirts, or making leatherware, but contrary to popular opinion, many bikers hold down skilled employment, blue-collar and white-collar, preferring a steady legal income to the chances of getting busted. Chances which, because of bikers high street visibility, are exceedingly likely.

The vast majority of bikers who aspire to the outlaw lifestyle have however no desire whatever to seek membership of formalised clubs, preferring instead to maintain their independence. They are known colloquially within the subculture as 'loners'. Others will merely form a loose attachment to one or more of the estab-

lished bikers' rights organisations, such as the American A.B.A. T.F. (Association of Bikers Against Totalitarian Enactments) or the M.M.A. (Modified Motorcycle Association) in the United States, or M.A.G. (Motorcycle Action Group) or it's more conservative colleague the B.M.F. (British Motorcyclists Federation) in this country, as a means of expressing their collective identity. Yet more will join a rally type club, on the surface shaped in the same mould as the hardcore outlaw clubs, but much less extreme and requiring little formal commitment beyond the attendance of club organised annual rallies. There are also several national quasi-outlaw clubs catering for those who wish to emulate clubs like the Angels stylistically without having to take on board the responsibilities associated with membership of such clubs. These groups have local branches and wear the appropriate colours on their backs, but have few, if any, formal rules of behaviour and are run from above by elected national officers. There is no required prospect period for those wishing to join and members may come and go at will. Nonetheless, in Britain, groups like the N.C.C. (National Chopper Club), the U.B.s (United Bikers), or the M.R.A. (Motorcycle Riders Association) attract many hundreds of long term members. But, for those few who would go the whole hog and join an outlaw club, the procedure is both lengthy and complex. I asked Fagin, President of the Hells Angels Kent chapter, what it was that a biker had to do to qualify for membership of a club like the Angels:

Fagin:

"Well what you have to do is just associate yourself with the club for an amount of time until they get to know you. And then you make it clear to them of your intentions, and then they'll

look at you in a different light than they'd look at just generally anybody. And then after a certain amount of time you would be told that you could become a prospective member. And then you'd be a prospect for however long it takes until people say, okay you're good enough to become a Hells Angel. Now that length of time could be anything from beginning to end from two years to five years. It's not something you can get into in a couple of months."

You've got to expect to go through a lot of trouble?

Fagin:

"That's right."

And when he's finished prospecting he gets his patches?

Fagin:

"That's right, he gets a full set of colours."

Tell me more about the membership initiation?

Fagin:

"Well, if somebody wanted to join the club then obviously he'd have to begin associating himself with the club, just going round places where they go. Then he'll make it known to members of that club, and obviously they'll tell everybody else of his intentions. And then they'd hold him in a different light and look at him in a different way to how his whole attitude is towards life in general, if you want to put it that way. And then he'd be referred to as hanging around, and he'd do that for as ever long as it takes before he actually becomes a prospective member of the club. Then he becomes a prospective member up until the time that everybody feels he is worthy of becoming a full-patch member of the Hells Angels."

His full back patch?

Fagin:

"That's right."

In fact, the procedure is somewhat more complicated. Having become familiar with one or more club members in a wider social setting, the aspiring member is usually invited to attend one of the numerous club parties held at the chapter's clubhouse or, in good weather, in the open air, where he will be introduced to the rest of the members of the club. Assuming that he is able to conduct himself with the necessary propriety in the eyes of the assembled company, he will then be asked to attend similar functions on a regular basis, during which time he will be carefully assessed for membership potential by all concerned. Following a period of several months mutual familiarisation with club members and their activities, somebody will take it upon themselves to sponsor him at a weekly chapter meeting, where all aspects of his character will be discussed at length and it will be decided whether or not he be considered as a club hang-around. If, on a majority vote, the meeting agrees, official hangaround status will be conferred on the applicant and his role within the club will become considerably more formalised. He will be expected to accompany the chapter on runs and also attend the clubhouse on meeting nights, although, as a hangaround, he will be excluded from the actual proceedings themselves.

The hangaround period is designed to test the applicant's commitment to the club before considering him as an official prospective member, thereby minimising the prospect drop out rate. It has a further important function, which is to circumvent any possibility (in the United States a very real possibility) of a police informer being infiltrated into the club. As

a hangaround he will be automatically precluded from involvement in official chapter business, particularly that which might incur consequences of a legal nature for those concerned. His background will be closely checked to try and establish any connection with law enforcement bodies and, assuming that all is in order, he will at some indeterminate point be considered as a likely candidate for prospectship.

Having been proposed and accepted as a prospect (assuming that is that he is in receipt of the necessary two thirds majority vote), he will be required to undergo a period of not less than twelve months prospectship, as laid down in the Hells Angels' national rules. The length of time that members are required to prospect varies considerably from club to club, some demand only the briefest period of familiarisation prior to the handing out of colours, whilst others adopt a much more formal approach, laying down a minimum prospectship of three, six or twelve months before the candidate is considered eligible for elevation to full-patch status. A Hells Angels prospect must wait at least one year before his name is put to a chapter meeting for consideration for membership. During this period he is expected to accede to every reasonable request put to him by a full-patch member (what is and what is not considered 'reasonable' is defined collectively by the chapter in question). He is not, as the media will have it, treated as a general dogsbody, being forced to clean and polish members' bikes and perform similar menial tasks. Nor must he commit a crime in the presence of club members in order to prove his worth, as the F.B.I. like to imagine. Rather, the purpose of prospectship is to ensure that the individual is able to adequately adjust to club life. He is therefore accorded great respect by members who have to look upon him as potentially 'one of them'. But, such respect still has

to be earned, and the regimen faced by a club prospect is a tough one. He must have his bike on the road at all times, turning up on it at every meeting throughout the year, bad weather or breakdowns are considered inexcusable, and non-compliance merely adds an extra week on to the prospect period. More importantly, he must attend all club functions - chapter meetings, national meetings, official parties, custom shows, national and international runs - as well as 'putting himself about' with club members in between. Prospects are also expected to look after the clubhouse, keeping it neat and tidy, taking care of security and working behind the bar. This entails their being on hand practically all of the time, inevitably divorcing them from former friends and family, as well as incurring them a considerable financial burden. The prospect must be seen to be able to stand up for himself at all times and to uphold the reputation of the club in public. He may be taken to task for his conduct by any full-patch member who feels that he is not pulling his weight, and brought up in front of a chapter meeting. Occasionally, such a rebuke will render him liable to a further set period of prospectship before he is voted upon as a full-patch member. Assuming that he receives the necessary 100 per cent vote, he will then be entitled to wear the full set of club colours and enjoy the rights and privileges of membership. If not, he must bide his time, being brought up for his vote at weekly intervals until each and every member is fully satisfied of his worth. It can, and often does, take up to two years before a Hells Angels prospect finally makes the grade as a full-patch member and is initiated into the club.

Much has been made in the media of the membership initiation

ritual, in which it is popularly supposed that the successful candidate willingly submits both himself and his newly acquired colours to be soaked in urine and smeared with a noxious mixture of vomit and excretia. This is a complete myth. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Although, on occasions, outlaw club members might cultivate a grubby appearance, they have too great a feeling of reverence for the club colours they wear than to abuse them in such a puerile fashion. They wear them at all times with pride and, as far as is possible given their lifestyle, keep them spotlessly clean. When one considers that a full set of Hells Angels patches can only be obtained from California and cost over £150.00 apiece in England, it comes as little surprise that members are anxious to preserve them as long as possible. Apart from their pride in the colours they wear, chapter members have far too great a respect for their incoming brother to consider humiliating or degrading him in any way. In reality, initiation into outlaw motorcycle clubs takes the form of nothing more than a few drinks at the bar after a prospect has successfully gained his colours, during which he is expected to buy the beer for all concerned.

Many prospects fall by the wayside, generally because they are unable or unwilling to maintain the high level of commitment required of them by the club. Others make it through the twelve months, only to be rejected by the chapter when they become eligible for their vote, a refusal by just one member being sufficient for a rejection. Reasons must be given for a no vote however and the member concerned must state these in front of both the prospect and his fellow members. To simply dislike the prospective member is not considered to be a good enough reason for rejection and, if this appears to be the case, he may be

overruled by the meeting. As a full-patch member, the successful prospect has to agree to abide by the rules of the club concerned. In the event of any infraction of these rules he must face the justice of his peers at the chapter meeting and, if deemed to be guilty, face the penalty laid down. Sometimes this will take the form of a fine or temporary suspension of the patch, but in extreme instances, the malfactor may be 'busted back' to prospect for twelve months or thrown out of the club altogether. In which case he will be accorded a 'dishonourable discharge', have his colours forcibly removed and any club tattoos he may possess irradiated. He will then be declared persona non grata by the club and run the risk of being stomped on sight. If however a member simply falls by the wayside and is voted out or opts to leave the club of his own volition, he will receive an 'honourable discharge', surrender his colours, and have an out date placed alongside his tattoos.

In either case, it is unlikely that the ex-member will have anything to do with his former comrades, even in the most informal of social settings, such is the stigma associated with his status in the eyes of the biker subculture. Very occasionally, members who have been honourably discharged will seek readmittance to the club concerned, in which case they will have to undergo a fresh period of prospectship. Likewise, some may seek admittance to the ranks of other outlaw clubs, but generally this course of action is frowned upon, clubs being reluctant to run the risk of creating a possible source of friction between themselves and the applicant's former club. More often than not, the ex-member simply reverts to the status of a loner, or gives up being a biker altogether.

CHAPTER XII: THE COLOURS

Club colours, or patches as they are more commonly termed within the biker subculture, are the insignia worn on the back of a sleeveless denim or leather waistcoat - a 'cut-off'. Colours denote the particular motorcycle club affiliation of the wearer (in much the same way that the surcoat of a medieval knight would have displayed his lordly allegiance or a jockey his mount's owner) and are his most treasured possessions, ranking in importance above even his bike. They are presented to him upon completion of the required period of prospectship to the club concerned, but they always remain the property of the club, to be returned in the event of the cessation of membership, either voluntarily or forcibly, depending on the manner of his leaving. Such is the value placed upon a set of patches, that clubs like the Hells Angels will automatically kick out any member who loses his to an enemy club, unless he was either unconscious or dead at the time they were taken.

Like his bike, the outlaw's patches are symbolic of his elite status within the broader motorcycle subculture, although unlike his bike they also convey this status beyond the confines of the subculture and out into the wider social arena. They become for the wearer a badge of deviance, a challenge to his enemies both within and without the subculture. It makes him easily identifiable to the police and to rival outlaw clubs, either of whom may wish to apprehend him and do him harm. But nevertheless, despite the ever present dangers, he is rarely seen without them on his back, unless he has extremely good reasons for wishing to remain incognito. The appearance of a one-percenter club member amongst his peers, inside or outside the club, not wearing his patch, denotes a considerable loss of status in their eyes, giving

rise to speculation as to his current standing within his club.

By far the most prevalent form of club colours consists of a centre patch appropriate to the club concerned - i.e. the Hells Angels' winged death's head or the Outlaws' skull and crossbones. To the lower right hand side of the centre patch can be found the M.C. patch, meaning that the wearer is a member of a motorcycle club. Above is the top rocker, a semi-circular patch displaying the club's name. And, at the bottom, another semi-circular patch, the bottom rocker, gives the geographical location

of the member's particular chapter (motorcycle club branch or subdivision) or country of origin. The patches proclaim the allegiance of the member to his own club and immediately differentiate him from both members of other clubs and the broader subculture. The bottom rocker further denotes the territorial rights of the club concerned or, in the case of larger clubs, the particular chapter. Clubs or chapters rarely enter into activity inside another club or chapter's designated territory, unless invited to do so by the host club or chapter. This even applies in the case of chapters belonging to the same club and wearing the same centre patch, where permission is always first sought before 'doing business' in each other's areas. Thus, the colours not only state the wearer's allegiance to his club, but also to his territory. Often, in the case of large internationally based clubs, like the Hells Angels, all the chapters (chapter clubs) in each particular country wear the same national bottom rocker, but nevertheless maintain their individual territorial rights, differentiating between chapters by means of a small territorial front patch worn above the breast pocket. This system also applies in areas of the United States where, for example, all Californian based Hells Angels wear a California bottom rocker and all New York state chapters wear a New York bottom rocker.

It is generally felt that where several different club chapters are located in a clearly defined area, either regional or national, it is in the interests of all concerned to wear the same bottom rocker. This has several advantages: firstly, it gives rise to confusion amongst law enforcement bodies seeking to identify particular individuals or chapters, particularly on runs where several chapters may be present. Secondly, it conveys an impression of size and strength to discourage enemy clubs or others who might threaten the group. And thirdly, it generates a feeling of solidarity within the membership on runs or other club gatherings, cutting across and offsetting any possible disputes which might otherwise arise between members of different chapters. Thus, the wearing of club colours has a multiplicity of meanings, not only for the club members themselves, but also for members of the wider motorcycle subculture. They represent a whole series of signs or signals about the status of the wearer, his particular club affiliation, his territorial base, and importantly whether he is 'friendly' and approachable or should be avoided, and perhaps feared.

I asked Fagin where the design of the Hells Angels colours originally came from:

Fagin:

"It came from the name of the club, the Hells Angels, which was formed on the 30th March 1947, which was the first official date of a club meeting. That was in San Bernadino in California. And the actual name of the club came from an old squadron in the U.S. Air Force, which people were members (of) during World War 11. That's where it came from. There's no sort of special mysticism behind the name or anything.

"Those guys were the first Hells Angels and some of them

rode bikes and founded the club - naturally enough they called it Hells Angels. As for the death's head itself, I really don't know where that came from, and quite honestly it doesn't really matter to us today. Our patches are still made in San Bernadino and are the same all over the world. Originally there were two sorts of death's head, the small one worn by the south Californian clubs and the large one, like the one we wear, by the northern clubs, but nowadays we all wear this one."

Although the media and the general public are apt to refer to all patch wearing motorcycle clubs by the generic term Hells Angels, the truth of the matter is very different indeed. There is a vast multiplicity of outlaw motorcycle clubs, each club having its own particular insignia, individual to its own membership, and jealously guarded by them. The Hells Angels' death's head is, for example, a patented design, its use in any context whatsoever banned without the express permission of the Hells Angels themselves. But, legal action is generally reserved for cases of abuse by business organisations or the media whereas individuals or clubs who transgress are dealt with physically by having the offending item removed from their jackets, forcibly if necessary. Instances of abuse are, needless to say, rare. It is not only the centre patch which is treated in this fashion, an 'unofficial' copyright extends to the use of the club name and also to the colour of the patches - i.e. the Hells Angels frown upon the misuse of their club colours, red and white, by any other clubs. Sometimes this is enforced and sometimes not, it usually depends upon the status and longevity of the transgressing club within the outlaw subculture, and whether or not they are seen to be friendly at the time. Unofficial users of either the death's head or the name Hells Angels are, on the other hand, always

dealt with severely. All outlaw motorcycle clubs, Hells Angels or not, are jealous of abuses of their territorial bottom rocker, and do not permit it to be worn by other clubs. Other clubs are, on occasions, allowed to run within their designated territory, but never wearing the same bottom rocker - i.e. in England, it is only the Hells Angels who wear an England bottom rocker, all other clubs, no matter how many individual chapters they may boast, are restricted to wearing regional bottom rockers - Satans Slaves Yorks or Devon, Mofos North Lincs or Sutton-In-Ashfield, Trojans South East, Roat Rats London etc., etc. These codes and demarcations are widely understood and respected within the outlaw motorcycle subculture as a whole, and it is extremely rare that they are deliberately transgressed. For instance, in the unlikely event that a newly formed club chose to appropriate the Hells Angels insignia as its own, and yet declined to apply for an official charter allowing them to do so, they would not only run a considerable risk of getting 'stomped' out of existence, they would also fail to gain status in the eyes of their peers for not being the 'real thing'. Imposters are not rated too highly within the outlaw subculture, and the status value of wearing a 'bogus patch' is practically nil as the wearer would be unable to participate in any of the subculture's major functions without taking the chance of losing his patch. There is therefore very little to be gained through transgressing the unwritten rules of patch wearing, except perhaps a punch in the mouth.

Besides his back patch, an outlaw biker, although not necessarily a club member, would probably wear at least one or more of the following front patches:

The 1%er patch. Usually worn above the breast pocket, this

diamond shaped patch signifies that the wearer holds himself as worthy of being counted amongst the outlaw fraternity. Its origins are a reaction to the statement made by the president of American Motorcyclists Association (A.M.A.) in the wake of the Hollister Gypsy Tour 'riot' in July 1947, when he publicly declared that ninety-nine percent of all motorcyclists were law abiding people, and those responsible for the trouble were an unrepresentative hooligan element - the one per cent. The attendant publicity in Life Magazine caused the nascent Californian outlaw clubs to organise themselves collectively around the 1%er label. Thus, this attempt to publicly disassociate 'respectable' sporting motorcyclists from their more rebellious peers signally failed, and instead had the very opposite effect. It engendered a previously lacking sense of solidarity amongst the original malfactors and rallied many more bikers to the 1%er 'cause'. This process of action and reaction is explained more fully in Chapter II, and although its origins may be largely unknown amongst the contemporary generation of outlaw bikers, the 1%er patch remains one of the most significant symbols uniting the subculture. Different outlaw clubs wear the 1%er patch made in their respective colours - i.e. Hells Angels, red on white, Pagans, blue on white, Road Rats, black on white, etc., etc.

The 13 patch. This patch, the figure 13 on a diamond shaped background is generally thought to signify that the wearer is a user of the drug marijuana. This notion is derived from the fact that the letter M for marijuana is the thirteenth letter of the alphabet. Hence the 13 patch. But, this is nothing more than a myth perpetuated for reasons of their own by the media and the police. Whilst it may well be true that the original wearers of the patch decided to utilise the symbol to cryptically advertise their deviancy to each other, that particular subcultural meaning

has long since disappeared, and today the 13 patch simply means that the wearer subscribes to the outlaw biker lifestyle. Since virtually every contemporary outlaw is or has been a marijuana smoker at one time or another, it is exceedingly unlikely that advertising the fact amongst each other would achieve any degree of status whatsoever. A much more likely explanation of the origin of the 13 patch is simply that the number 13 has traditionally been held to be unlucky, hence those choosing to appropriate it as a public symbol are challenging a deeply ingrained social taboo. They are 'putting their luck on the line' and publicly flaunting the fact. It is a show of bravado and little more, but over the years it has become a customary part of the dress of an outlaw biker. The 13 patch is generally worn above the breast pocket on the opposite side from the 1% patch.

Wings. Wings (originally United States Air Force pilots' wings enamelled in different colours, although more latterly cloth facsimiles) are very seldom worn these days even by members of hardcore outlaw motorcycle clubs. Despite the continued widespread popularisation of this myth much beloved by the media when seeking to sensationalise the exploits of club members, in common with initiation rituals and biting the heads off live chickens, the acquisition of wings has largely disappeared. The wearing of wings today is considered to be passe - uncool - within the subculture. Even during the 1950s and '60s, when different coloured wings were awarded by motorcycle clubs in acknowledgement of their members' participation in various forms of socially outrageous sexual activity, it was nowhere near as widespread a practice as is popularly imagined. It is highly likely that even where they were displayed the wearer had not necessarily performed the required act, but merely chose to provoke public reaction by

letting them think that his sexual 'deviance' knew no bounds.

Below is a list taken from the files of the Metropolitan Police which annotates the supposed meanings of the different coloured wings and the appropriate acts for which they are awarded.

INSIGNIA

White Wings:	Sexual intercourse with a virgin
Brown Wings:	Anal intercourse with a male or female or has licked clean the anus of another 'Angel'
Purple Wings:	Sexual intercourse with a girl who has venereal disease or has committed rape in presence of the Chapter or taken part in a 'Gang Bang' with an unwilling female
Blue Wings:	Has been convicted of violence against a police officer
Gold Wings:	Sexual intercourse with a corpse or with a girl over a motorbike in public
Grey Wings:	Sexual intercourse with an old woman
Black Wings:	Sexual intercourse or cunnilingus with a coloured woman
Red Wings:	Cunnilingus or intercourse with a woman while she is menstruating
Red/Black Wings:	Cunnilingus or intercourse with a coloured woman while she is menstruating
Baby Wings:	Sexual intercourse whilst baby in between male and female or eating miscarriage

To obtain these wings, the act must be witnessed by not less than two members of the same Chapter.

When a 'Hells Angel' leaves one Chapter to join

another he does not keep his insignia but starts again.

According to a self-acknowledged authority on the subject of Hells Angels, Dr. Raymond C. Morgan, an organised crime investigator from the San Diego, California, District Attorney's office,

"The meaning behind this patch is one of the more interesting (sic) and says something about the moral code of at least those who wear this patch. In order for a member to wear this patch he must commit an act of oral copulation on a female in front of a designated number of his fellow gang members. The color of the wings on his gang jacket designates the various types of oral copulation committed."82

Dr. Morgan then proceeds to furnish his readers with yet another 'official' list of the requirements necessary to obtain the wing patch - i.e.:

"COLOR

REQUIREMENTS

White Wings	The member must orally copulate a white female's genital area
Black Wings	A member must orally copulate a black female's genital area
Yellow Wings	A member must orally copulate an oriental female's genital area
Red Wings	A member must orally copulate the genital area of a menstruating female
Brown Wings	A member must orally copulate a female's anal aperture
Green Wings	A member must orally copulate the genital area of a female with a venereal disease (unknown if this fact is determined before

or after the act).

Purple Wings

A member must orally copulate the genital area of a female cadaver or dead person

Any repeating by a member of the acts described above are generally denoted by either a star or hash mark below the wings." 83

I would suggest that the above list probably has more to say about the moral code of people like Dr. Morgan, who seem to spend an inordinate amount of their time engaged in a relentless search for even greater acts of sexual 'deviancy' which can be ascribed to those whom he seeks to malign. However, his list, in common with the previous one, is nonetheless 'interesting', because it is such 'information', albeit completely unfounded, which is constantly quoted and requoted whenever an incident involving members of a motorcycle club is brought to the attention of the public. Such things are seized upon with great relish by the media and the police in order to highlight the innate depravity of the group concerned. In common with other popular myths about outlaw bikers, like the selling of old ladies for petrol, or even a packet of cigarettes, or the wearing of urine soaked clothing, the wings myth has become a part of the public stigmatisation of bikers. During the entire course of my association with outlaw bikers I have never once had occasion to witness one of the formal acts required to obtain the wings patch, and only on extremely rare occasions have I seen a wings patch worn on a biker's cut-off. This is not to say that the practice never existed in some rudimentary fashion at some point in the history of the subculture, indeed it is referred to in Hunter S. Thompson's book 'Hells Angels', but it is nowhere near as widespread a practice as is generally thought, and never existed in the highly ritualised manner described, although it is extremely doubtful that it will ever be dropped by the media, for

whom it sells countless numbers of newspapers.

The 'FILTHY FEW' patch. Again, in the words of the 'expert' Dr. Morgan, "reliable sources (the San Francisco Police Department) (state that) ... this patch designates a group of 'killers'. Allegedly, in order to belong to this elite group of the 'Filthy Few', current members of the Hells Angels must kill another human being in the presence of the elite organisation. It is said (also presumably by the San Francisco Police Department) this group engages in the business of murder for hire, "contracts", or hits." 84

I suppose that Dr. Morgan imagines that those concerned deliberately adopt the wearing of the 'Filthy Few' patch in order that their victims can tell who they are, and subsequently so that the police know who to look for! Whilst the origins of the 'Filthy Few' patch are unknown, it is highly unlikely that they have anything whatsoever to do with Dr. Morgan's account, and today the 'Filthy Few' patch is worn by many Hells Angels' members, members of other motorcycle clubs, and individual unaligned outlaw bikers. It holds no more significance than the fact that the wearer chooses to adopt it as a form of subcultural identity.

The 'NOMAD' patch. This patch worn on the front of the cut-off (although some clubs, such as the Birmingham based Cycle Tramps, have adopted it as a bottom rocker) signifies that the wearer is widely travelled, and settles wherever he chooses - i.e. nomadic.

The A.F.F.A. patch. This patch is worn only by bona fide members of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club and means Angels Forever, Forever Angels, an affirmation of group loyalty which has been appropriated by other outlaw clubs in different forms -

i.e. P.F.F.P. (Pagans Forever, Forever Pagans) or S.F.F.S. (Slaves Forever, Forever Slaves).

The F.F.F.L. patch. Seldom, if ever, worn these days, this patch means Dope Forever, Forever Loaded. A variation of the same patch is mentioned by Dr. Morgan in his book, 'The Angels Do Not Forget' this is the A.F.F.L. patch which he maintains stands for "Acid or Alcohol Forever, Forever Loaded."⁸⁵ I have personally never come across such a patch. In his extensive glossary of motorcycle patches, Dr. Morgan designates two further examples of patch which may be worn on the front of an outlaw biker's cut-off. The first is the California Highway Patrol emblem, worn upside down, which he says "allegedly means the patch was taken from the law enforcement officer by force." ⁸⁶ And the second, the White Power Fist, he says is worn by the "highly prejudicial" Hells Angels Motorcycle Club who "hate blacks".⁸⁷ Again, I have personally never witnessed such a patch displayed on a Hells Angels member's cut-off, and whilst, as in any other large group in society, there might be members who are racially prejudiced, it is highly unlikely that any chapter of the organisation would wish to be ubiquitously associated with such an opinion. Furthermore, it is a fact that both the Hells Angels chapters in New Zealand are largely composed of black Maori members, who would be unlikely to associate with brothers who overtly express contempt for the colour of their skin.

The Run patch. As described elsewhere, the run is the social occasion par excellence of the outlaw motorcycle subculture. For members of clubs run attendance is often compulsory, and the larger events, where the venue is usually a motorcycle race meeting like Daytona or Sturgis, attract many thousands of riders. The run patch is worn by many outlaw bikers to show that they have

participated in various biker events - runs, rallies, custom shows - either hosted by their own club or others. There is a great deal of status accruing to the wearer of a large variety of run patches, particularly from the bigger more prestigious international events, as it signifies to his peers that he is a high-mileage well-travelled biker. Run patches can be worn anywhere on the front of the cut-off.

The Officer's patch. The Officer patch signifies that the wearer holds an official position within his particular motorcycle club. By far the most usual examples of the officer's patch correspond to the five universally accepted officers' positions within outlaw motorcycle clubs - President, Vice-President, Sergeant-At-Arms, Secretary and Treasurer. Although, on occasions, a Road Captain patch may also be seen, signifying that the wearer holds responsibility in his club for the organisation and conduct of club runs. Officers' patches are worn on the breast pocket of the cut-off.

The Outlaw patch. The Outlaw patch means precisely what it says, that the wearer considers himself to be an outlaw biker. It is quite a common sight amongst bikers, club members and others. It should not be taken to mean that the wearer is necessarily a member of the Outlaws Motorcycle Club, an extremely large and widespread club with chapters throughout the United States, Canada and Australasia. The Outlaw patch can be worn anywhere on the front of the cut-off.

The F.T.W. patch. A widely worn patch, particularly in the United States. F.T.W. means 'Fuck The World' and, quite obviously, speaks for itself. It can be worn anywhere on the cut-off.

The 69 patch. This patch, the figure 69 on a circular background has obvious sexual connotations and is displayed purely for shock value. It is rarely worn by club members or other hardcore bikers, not being considered to have a particularly high status value. The 69 patch can be worn anywhere on the front of the cut-off.

The Name patch. This patch is sometimes worn on the front of the cut-off and displays the nickname of the wearer. It is very seldom worn by club members who generally prefer to remain anonymous in public.

The 81 patch. This patch is worn on the front of the cut-off by Hells Angels members, the figure 81 representing the eighth and first letters of the alphabet, H and A for Hells Angels.

The R.I.P. patch. This patch is worn in memory of a lost brother, usually by club members, who may also display a tattoo to the same effect.

Besides these various patches common amongst the outlaw motorcycle subculture, an individual biker will generally wear a number of other loose patches and pins on the front of his cut-off. Prominent amongst these are the Ride To Live Live To Ride patch, the Fuck Off patch, the skull and crossbones patch, the Born Loser patch, and many more. The majority of bikers are also keen to show their allegiance to a particular make or model of motorcycle, Harley-Davidson being the most usual, whether they ride one or not, its ownership having the highest status value amongst outlaw bikers. Similarly, many bikers will display Easyriders, Iron Horse or Back Street Heroes patches, the names of their favourite biker magazines, or patches proclaiming their membership of bikers' rights organisations, such as A.B.A.T.F. or

M.M.A. in the United States, B.R.O. (Bikers Rights Organisations) in Canada, M.R.A. (Motorcycle Riders Association) in Australia, or M.A.G. in Britain.

Outlaw bikers also like to wear a selection of pins on their cut-offs, many of which record their attendance at rallies, runs or custom shows, or display the name of the bike that they ride. But, for motorcycle club members, such pins have a particular significance. For instance, the Hells Angels' death's head pin comes in a variety of different designs, each design individual to a particular chapter of the organisation. These will often be given away as presents to, or exchanged with, members of other chapters as tokens of brotherhood, and are very highly prized. Some well-travelled club members display a large collection of such pins on the front of their cut-offs.

Whilst on the subject of pins, I should like to touch upon that popular misconception, namely that the members of outlaw motorcycle clubs are apt to desport items of Nazi paraphernalia on their persons. In fact, such things as swastikas and SS badges are seldom worn, either for political reasons or shock value, their use being regarded as somewhat childish. And, in the rare instances that they are seen, it is highly unlikely indeed that the wearer has fascistic tendencies. In the case of the Hells Angels, widely imagined by the general public to go around draped in swastikas, the notion is even more absurd, as they take great pains as a club to maintain a non-political stance, and certainly discourage their members, whatever their individual beliefs, from wearing anything which might connect the club name which organisations at either end of the political spectrum. This is fully explained in Chapter XVII..

CHAPTER XIII: THE MEETING

The outlaw club meeting is a solemn and sacrosanct affair. Indeed, such is the degree of reverence attached to the meeting that the Hells Angels are wont to refer to it as their 'church'. The Angels, in common with the vast majority of outlaw motorcycle clubs, hold a compulsory weekly meeting at the same time and in the same place every week, which all the full-patch members of the chapter must attend (prospects are also obliged to be in attendance, but are not allowed full participation in the proceedings). Non-attendance without prior permission or an acceptable reason (if the member happens to find himself in hospital or in police custody) is punishable by a fine, normally amounting to double the amount of the weekly subs. This sum is increased on each subsequent non-attendance, until after a period of four weeks, the individual concerned is brought to the attention of all present and his suitability for continued club membership debated. Latecomers are also fined, unless they have given prior notice or broken down on the way to the meeting. In practice however each chapter negotiates its way around these formal rules and exceptions are made for full-patch members in good standing who, for one reason or another, are unable to attend meetings on a regular basis. For instance, members whose employment might clash with meeting times are usually accorded exemption, provided that they make every effort to attend when possible. Likewise, members who are away travelling or visiting other chapters are given a leave of absence from meetings, although they are expected to attend the meetings of any other chapters of the same parent club who they may be staying with. This is in any case regarded as a basic courtesy towards the brother chapter. It is rare that weekly chapter meetings do not command one hundred per cent attendance from all members on the street, not because of

the threat of fines, nor because of peer group disapproval, but because meetings play such a highly symbolic part in the life of the club itself. They are the one single occasion in the week when every member of the chapter gathers together in their own company, without the presence of outsiders and, like club runs, are seen as a reaffirmation of membership loyalty and solidarity.

Club meetings are highly ritualised affairs, conducted in secret according to long standing practice. No one outside of the chapter is allowed to witness the proceedings, except for visiting members of other chapters of the same club, and club business is never discussed outside the meeting. It is not just a question of secrecy for secrecy's sake, although some matters raised in club meetings would undoubtedly render members liable to prosecution, but more the case that outlaw motorcycle clubs, in common with other 'elite' groups in society, regard their internal affairs as being of no concern to anyone outside of the group. This collective secrecy further engenders a feeling of solidarity between club members. They resent 'outsiders' knowing what they do simply because they have no right to know, and the more that the media is given to wild speculation as to what actually goes on in outlaw motorcycle clubs, the more that those concerned attempt to maintain their privacy. They see no reason whatever as to why they should lay their internal workings open to the public gaze. Meetings are held in the club room of the chapter's clubhouse assuming of course that the chapter in question has a clubhouse (if not they are usually rotated between the homes of different full-patch members) in a room specifically reserved for the conduct of club affairs, access to which is restricted at all times to club members and prospects only. The club room is ceremonially draped with club paraphernalia - patches, run posters, photos of other chapters, charter anniversary gifts, etc., etc. The setting

serves as a reminder to all present of the permanency and history of the club, and of the chapter's links with other chapters wearing the same patch throughout the world, and lends a much greater solemnity to the proceedings, which in some ways takes on the air of a quasi-religious event. Meetings start promptly at the agreed time, the same from week to week. The Sergeant-At-Arms calls for order and the chapter's Treasurer proceeds to collect the weekly subs and enter fines in the book against the names of non-attenders. As soon as the financial business is dealt with, the chapter's prospects are permitted to address the meeting. When they've had their say, full-patch members air any criticisms they may have regarding the prospects' conduct - whether an individual is pulling his weight or not, fulfilling his obligations to the club, and so on. The prospects are then told to leave the room and the chapter meeting proper is brought into session. Members are called upon by the Sergeant-At-Arms to put forward any matters of relevance to the club. Topics under discussion range very widely indeed, from relatively minor points concerning the day to day running of the clubhouse, through to major issues affecting the club as a whole, such as national or international runs, or potential trouble with other outlaw clubs. Everything brought up, however seemingly inconsequential, is seriously and thoroughly debated by all members present for as long as it takes to achieve a consensus. Occasionally, differences of opinion are irreconcilable and votes are called for by the Sergeant-At-Arms. Every full-patch member has a vote, except those who are suspended for one reason or another, and on all important matters voting is compulsory, most clubs requiring a two thirds rather than a simple majority to carry a vote. As soon as members' business is out of the way, other matters, such as reports from or issues to be raised at England or European meetings are brought up by the Secretary and discussed by the whole chapter. When, and

only when, every single member is fully satisfied that all relevant matters have been properly aired, the Sergeant-At-Arms recalls the prospects in order that they can be informed of what they are required to do during the coming week. The meeting is then declared over and all concerned retire to the bar to wind down. Members' conduct in meetings is regarded as supremely important. A member talking out of turn can be fined, and drunkenness or excessive dope smoking is frowned upon. Meetings can, and very often do, go on for hours, but so important a facet of club life are they considered to be, that rarely does anybody complain or get out of order. The decisions of the meeting are binding on all members, without exception, and can only be overturned at a subsequent meeting. Any member who is not happy with a particular decision is quite entitled to demand a revote on the issue weekly if he so desires.

Meetings are also the body which decides whether or not prospective members are worthy of admittance to the club as full-patch members. Prospect votes take place only when all other weekly business has been concluded, at which point the candidate for membership is summoned into the room where his merits and demerits are openly discussed by all present. If he is rejected by one or more members, the ceremony is repeated on a weekly basis until he either receives his full set of patches or is kicked out of the club. Likewise, the meeting has the power to temporarily suspend or demote to prospect for a minimum period of twelve months any full-patch member who has transgressed club rules. In extreme cases, where the offence committed is of a severity sufficient to warrant the penalty of discharge from the club, the member concerned must make an appearance at a meeting before his colours can be formally removed.

Thus, the chapter meeting can be seen to perform two vital roles within the outlaw motorcycle club. It functions symbolically as a continual reaffirmation of group loyalty and solidarity, and also practically as the supreme decision-making body, both regulating the day to day affairs of the club and planning future policy. Weekly meetings serve to disseminate power between all full-patch members of the chapter, thereby minimising the risk of any one member or membership faction from gaining ascendancy. The reification of the meeting as the highest medium of authority within the chapter inevitably acts as a check on the power vested in the club officers, up to and including the club president, who play only a secondary and largely administrative role. Indeed, there are members in all chapters who, whilst having no desire to put themselves forward for election as officers, are nevertheless able to exert a high degree of influence on club policy through skillfull use of the meeting as a forum of debate.

In the case of the Hells Angels, and a few of the other larger outlaw clubs with two or more constituent chapters, regional or national meetings may be held on a monthly basis in order to negotiate wider aspects of club policy - conflicts with law enforcement, disputes with other outlaw clubs, the admittance of hangaround or prospect chapters, the organisation of runs, etc. etc., and as a means of adjudication upon members or chapters who may have transgressed national rules. These collective meetings are attended by at least two officers from each chapter, mandated to represent its members' views. Attendance is compulsory, failure to do so being punishable by a fine levied by the central treasury on the chapter concerned. In practice however this is rarely necessary, as every chapter is anxious to have its opinions taken into consideration. The venue of such meetings

is rotated on a monthly basis between chapters, and they are usually timed to coincide with the anniversary party of the chapter concerned or some similar important subcultural event. As in the case of the weekly chapter meetings, the regional or national meeting serves to further enhance inter-chapter group solidarity, providing a medium of communication and social intercourse without which conflict might arise. Again, great deference is displayed towards the proceedings by all present, the Sergeant-At-Arms of the host chapter acting to regulate procedure and ensure good order. The Hells Angels not only hold regular national meetings, but also quarterly continental and annual world meetings, hosted alternately by different national clubs to coincide with major events in the Angels' calender.

CHAPTER XIV : ON THE HIGHWAY - THE OUTLAW RUN

"The first adventure I ever had was the first time I went on a run with the Hells Angels ... We were making it down the highway, our destination Bass Lake, near Fresno, California. This the Labour Day weekend of '61. There were six motorcycles in all from the Frisco Chapter. And I was on my Limey Triumph. I felt out-of-sight wonderful because I was riding with the Hells Angels. They did not notice me, and then again, I was not neglected. And at the same time there was a wonder - Now I can see that there was a gleam in their eyes from looking at me. 'Maybe he we can perfect'. For I got the eye from many now. As we spun on and on down the highway stopping at service stations, hotdog stands - HraaaGHH - belching bottles of wine, rolling in the wheat fields, and like really blowin' the minds of anyone who passed by. It was a wonderful thing if anybody could see it the right way. To me it was new, everything was new, but it was a dream comin' true, for I, standing in my youth of 19 was ready to get on that dream. Though I knew not where it would lead, I'll be goddamed if I was not ready to go all the way!

" ... Along the way we passed by the Oakland Chapter smoking a lot of grass at the side of the road. That day everything moved, moved in action ... We left the scene of Oakland standing among tall, leanⁿ choppers. Handlebars that went into they sky - it really did blow my mind. And then the thought of that time was knowin' there were really going to be seven chapters of Hells Angels at Bass Lake, and it DAMN SURE TURNED OUT TO BE GREAT!" 88

The run is the single most important social event in the calendar of the outlaw motorcycle club. It is a 'gathering of the clans' in which every constituent chapter of a particular club, and in some cases two or more allied clubs, load up their bikes and head for a pre-arranged secret destination to spend up to a week in each others' company.

To the outlaw biker, the club run represents far more than simply a mobile party. It is a highly ritualised affair, planned months in advance, in which every single member, prospects and hangarounds included, is expected to participate. Indeed, the rules of the Hells Angels and other major clubs demand full participation of their members, defaulters being subject to a fine or even expulsion for non-attendance. The run is a club tradition, past runs are recalled with affection by older members and become important part of the collective folk history of the club concerned, creating an unbreakable thread of historical continuity. As one of the Angels, Brendan, told me:

"They (the runs) are our main events. They generate a togetherness amongst us. Every brother from every chapter is there, unless they're in hospital or in prison, they're all there. It's a big thing for us. We're all there from the beginning to the end, whatever happens. Sometimes it's a bummer, but we never leave unless we all leave together. That's what makes us strong in the eyes of other people."

In spite of the prescribed penalty for non-attendance, members seldom, if ever, miss a run by choice. Even those incapacitated, and consequently excused, through injury or illness, will contrive to cadge a lift in one of the back-up

vans which accompany the pack of bikes to take care of breakdowns - such is the importance accorded to the run. The English Angels hold two major 'official' runs a year, the May Day Run which takes place over the bank holiday weekend, and the Summer Run which takes place over a week in August. Attendance is compulsory for every member of every chapter of Hells Angels England. There is also an annual European Hells angels run, rotated from country to country, which at least two representatives of every chapter are required to attend, as well as a World Run, rotated from continent to continent, which two representatives from every chartered country are required to attend. Every chapter has its own part to play in the organisation and administration of a run. One chapter will select and prepare the site, another will procure the beer, another the food, music, transport and so on. Those chapters not engaged in the preparation of the run will share the task of site security with the prospects.

Apart from the collective organisation of the run itself, each individual member will spend many hours, days, or sometimes weeks, meticulously preparing his bike for the event. Such preparation is not only designed to ensure that his bike will make it to the run and back unplagued by mechanical problems, but perhaps more importantly, so that his newly-fettled steed will shine in the eyes of his peers. The bikers attach a great deal of pride to their ability to put together a custom bike which stands out from the crowd, and when, as on a run, that particular crowd is made up of respected fellow club members, any praise accruing to his efforts is considered infinitely more worthwhile. Choppers will often be rebuilt on an annual basis specifically for the May Day Run, and

debuted in front of fellow enthusiasts in the same way that an artist might display a painting at the Royal Academy's annual exhibition. The degree of status to be gained from such peer group approbation is considerable, far more so than the winning of an award at a formal, publicly attended custom show. Thus, some riders may devote all their spare time over the entire winter period just to make sure that their mount will outshine the others on the May Day Run.

But it isn't so much what the club run actually means to the bikers themselves that is the most important aspect of this particular activity. Rather, it is how the phenomenon is perceived by those with whom it comes into, albeit passing, contact. The run is the single most visible facade of the biker subculture, it is the whole rolling show transported direct to the observer's own home town. Not too many citizens would go to the trouble of searching out a biker bar and chatting to the patrons in order to find out what lies behind the media-projected image and, accordingly, only the most cursory glimpse of the massed colour and noise of a run going by is all that the general public have on which to base their thoughts on the subject. Unlike virtually any other contemporary subculture, it is this sheer collective visibility which moulds and shapes societal reaction towards the bikers. Few people are concerned with what practices the membership of what they regard as a deviant group get up to in the privacy of their own homes, but when that membership masses in its hundreds and takes to the streets and, worse still, streets where the respectable bourgeois has his home, then such 'deviants' become a cause for concern - a public problem upon which is focused the attention of the civil authorities. As one San Francisco

policeman summed it up:

"Basically they (the bikers) are just like Negroes. By themselves they're no more trouble than anybody else - but the minute they get in a group they go all to pieces, they really do."⁸⁹

And if that group happens, on its way to some remote destination far from the public gaze, to pass through 'respectable neighbourhoods', then conflict, albeit conflict generated solely by eye and ear contact, will inevitably arise. Such a public spectacle will never be tolerated by those whose function it is to bring order to our highways and byways. Equally, the outlaw clubs are unlikely to abandon what for them is the major form of cultural activity. As Thompson explains:

"A run is a lot of things to the Angels: a party, an exhibition and an exercise in solidarity. 'You never know how many Angels there are until you go on a big run,' says Zorro. 'Some get snuffed, some go to the slammer, some drop out and there's always new guys who've joined. That's why the runs are important - you find out who's on your side.'

"For most of the year the Hells Angels are pretty quiet. Around home, on their own turf, they cultivate a kind of forced co-existence with the local police. But on almost any summer weekend one of the half-dozen chapters might decide to roam on its own, twenty or thirty strong ... Wail(ing) through traffic at eighty-five or ninety, using all three lanes of the freeway or running straight down the centreline if there's no other way to pass booming along the roads to some small town with a token police force ...

"These independent forays often make news, but it is their two major runs - Labour Day and the Fourth - that the hell and headlines break loose. At least twice a year outlaws from all parts of the state gather somewhere in California for a king-size brain-bender.

"It takes a strong leader like Barger to maintain the discipline necessary to get a large group of Hells Angels to the runs destination. Trouble can break out almost anywhere. (The Angels won't admit it, but one of the main kicks they get on a run comes from spooking and jangling citizens along the way.) They'd have no problem getting from the Bay Area to Bass Lake if they wanted to travel incognito, dressed like other weekenders and riding in Fords or Chevrolets. But this is out of the question. They wear their party clothes, making themselves as conspicuous as possible ...

"'People are already down on us because we're Hells Angels,' Zorro explained. 'This is why we like to blow their minds. It just more or less burns 'em, that's all. They hate anything that's not right for their way of living.'" 90

Such an attitude is hardly guaranteed to win friends and influence people ...

Originally, the typical run was a very much more public affair comprising scores of unaligned riders charging recklessly from place to place, constantly on the move until the time came to camp for the night at some randomly chosen spot. Sometimes the riders would head for a particular motorcycle related destination, such as a custom show, drag or road race meeting. And usually, as in the case of the early American

Motorcycle Association sanctioned events, conflict would arise between the insurgents and the organising body. Their behaviour, real or imagined, inevitably attracted the attention of law enforcement agencies, who proceeded to closely monitor the larger runs, advising sheriffs' departments, tradesmen and townspeople alike against extending any form of hospitality towards the bikers. Indeed, many believe that the celebrated Hollister 'riot', which led to the involuntary estrangement of the outlaws from the 'citizen motorcyclists', was sparked off by the refusal of A.M.A. officials to allow entry to a pack of bikers from two clubs, the Galloping Gooses and the Booze Fighters, unless they first removed their club colours from the back of their jackets. As one of those present at the time later commented:

"We were really just neighbourhood bike riders, but we were real riders. None of us owned cars; we rode (our) bikes to work five days a week, and on weekends we'd crank 'em up and head out to watch the pros race on one of the many ... tracks that southern California had at that time.

"The difference was that in 1946 we decided to form the Rambling Wrecks Motorcycle Club (the forerunner of the Galloping Gooses). There was never a formal organisation, with formal officers and such, but meetings were held and the bros acted together to keep out hangarounds who didn't measure up.

"We all lived around Costa Mesa, and when we started the club our biggest problem became finding a place to go ... We were not like today's 'one-percenters' or anything, but we were still considered pretty wild for those times. I guess it was just because there weren't many bikes around then. Even

at the big bike meets, a lot of the straight people thought they were being invaded if they saw more than two bikes turn up together." 91

In the United States, from the very beginning, statewide and national runs of the larger outlaw clubs, in particular the Hells Angels, would command widespread speculation in the media as to their intended destination, well in advance of the actual date of departure. The police would warn those en route to batten down the hatches, the National guard would be alerted and the entire area be put under a virtual state of siege. The outlaws, having been turned away from the race tracks, were forced to seek alternative sites at which to rendezvous. Their choice of such destinations as the well-known California beauty spot Bass Lake gave rise to grave public concern. Everyone had read the alarming newspaper reports about the goings-on at Hollister, Riverside, Ensenada and Tecate, and were consequently extremely loath indeed to play willing hosts to these infamous town-wreckers. The bikers, for their part, simply wanted to be left alone to enjoy their runs in peace. The publicity given to 'race track riots' had attracted much unwelcome attention, and wherever they travelled in groups of more than half a dozen they were routinely stopped, searched and run out of town by zealous police officers. By the early sixties, it had become apparent that outlaw bikers on a run were 'public enemy number one' in the eyes of both law enforcement and politicians anxious to make a name for themselves as crime-busters. It wasn't so much a case of what the bikers actually did in their daily lives that mattered, but more how they were perceived as a menace to the populace when travelling en masse, that gave cause for

public concern. The fact that a whole group of noisy, garishly attired, wild young men on motorcycles could, without seeking prior permission, simply roar through towns and camp wherever they wanted, when they wanted, was far from an attractive prospect to those who cherished ideals of juvenile discipline and the sanctity of private property. Thompson recalls a typical radio bulletin of the time:

"The Sierra community of Bass Lake is bracing itself this morning for a reported invasion of the notorious Hells Angels motorcycle gang. Heavily armed police and sheriff's deputies are stationed on all roads leading to Bass Lake. Madera County sheriff, Martin Young, reports helicopters and other emergency forces standing by. Neighbouring law enforcement agencies, including the Kern County sheriff's Canine Patrol have been alerted and are ready to move. Recent reports say the Hells Angels are massing in Oakland and San Bernadino. Stay tuned for further details ..." 92

The Hells Angels themselves first achieved national prominence when they roared unexpectedly into California's Monterey Peninsula on Labour Day weekend of 1964. According to contemporary newspaper reports, there were some three hundred of them 'long-haired, bizarre-looking, foul-mouthed, noisy and menacing - all wearing their colors: swastikas, wings, Levis and 1% patches'. They were making their annual run to the Pacific coast, and set up camp near the small town of Seaside, specifically chosen because of its sparsely populated location. There was a secondary purpose to the run, which was to raise funds from the membership to send the corpse of a brother Angel, James T 'Mother' Miles, killed in

a motorcycle accident, back to his home state of North Carolina for burial. And so, under the watchful eyes of Monterey's police, the Angels built a bonfire and settled down to enjoy their fund-raising party. The report of California's Attourney General, Thomas C Lynch, gives the official version of what happened next:

"Early on the morning of Saturday 6, a complaint was made to Sheriff's officers by the erstwhile companions of two girls, aged 14 and 15, that they had been taken away from their boy-friends by some Hell's Angels at the site of the camp. Shortly after, deputies found one completely nude and another with only a small amount of clothing on her. Both alleged that they had been raped by 5 to 10 men just prior to the arrival of the officers. They professed to be unable to identify any responsables at the time. Some hours later, four men were arrested after being identified by the girls. Two of the men identified themselves as presidents of the North Sacramento and Richmond Hell's Angels chapters ..."⁹³

The following morning the police escorted the Angels and their girlfriends out of town, detaining the four suspects for questioning. The newspapers were quick to pick up on the story, giving headline coverage to the 'Monterey Hell's Angels Rape', provoking a local politician, Fred S. Farr, a state senator, into demanding that Attourney General Lynch investigate not only this specific outrage, but also the whole question of the Hells Angels and their apparent penchant for terrorising small communities. He wanted such runs restricted by law, with only bona fide **sporting motorcycle clubs** being issued permits to travel abroad in large numbers. Alarm over the activities of outlaw motorcyclists was not new, but what

was different, however, was this almost panicky determination to do something about it.

Lost in all the hullabaloo was the fact, reported obscurely or not at all, that on September 25th all charges against the four Hells Angels had been dropped after the girls admitted making false allegations because they were frightened of what their parents might have had to say about their late night visit to the bikers' party. Still, the impression was actively conveyed by the media that foul deeds had been committed and the authorities were acting correctly in seeking to curb the menace.

The Attorney General's report was made public at a press conference in the middle of March 1965, about six months after the non-events in Monterey, and it caused an immediate and sensational reaction. For days it became impossible to buy a newspaper anywhere in California that didn't contain some terrifying account of what the Hells Angels had been up to. "No act is too degrading for the pack," wrote Time magazine: "But their favourite activity seems to be terrorising whole towns."⁹⁴ The article went on to describe graphically how the Angels and some allied clubs had all but destroyed the tiny town of Porterville, California in September 1963, despite the fact that it wasn't considered newsworthy at the time. The Attorney General's report itself cited seventeen specific instances of 'hoodlum activities'. It declared that the offences most commonly committed on an outlaw run were assault, automobile and motorcycle theft, rape, sexual perversion, the habitual use of dangerous drugs and, for some unexplained reason, forgery. Nevertheless, upon closer inspection, the

report is oddly unforthcoming about what had actually been proven in court against the bikers. It merely noted that the Monterey rape charges had been dropped because "further investigation raised questions as to whether forcible rape had been committed."⁹⁵ It also revealed, somewhat reluctantly, that not one of those seventeen listed 'hoodlum activities' had resulted in a major conviction, the majority not even in arrests. It turned out that 151 Hells Angels or associates had actually been convicted of a felony, resulting in terms of imprisonment for 85. The 1,023 misdemeanour convictions reported were mainly for traffic violations. Furthermore, the fact that these figures covered a period of fifteen years was entirely omitted from the report. This didn't exactly qualify the Angels for good conduct awards but it did make somewhat less dramatic reading.

Lurid stories continued to abound in the press. Packs of Angels were suddenly to be seen everywhere, committing all sorts of atrocities. The climax came when the eighteen year old daughter of a police lieutenant was raped in Reseda, California, allegedly by Angels passing through on a run. The girl had been lured into a house containing twelve to twenty men, including an unspecified number of 'the notorious Hell's Angels'. The police rounded up sixteen suspects, and the girl's father subsequently gunned down one of them who had had nothing to do with the crime. Ultimately, five suspects were convicted, all local men, and not one of them a Hells Angel.

About this time, a newspaper, The Porteville Recorder, saw fit to publish an editorial which indignantly took issue with the Time inspired stories that the Angels had gone berserk in Porteville, California. The truth, said the Recorder, was

that at the first sign of trouble the Angels had been escorted peacefully out of town. Apparently, the paper was annoyed that no credit had been given to the Porteville Police Department for having ably prevented precisely the sort of hell-raising behaviour that the outside press claimed had taken place.

What the Angels were getting out of all this unwanted publicity was nothing but trouble. Even Sonny Barger's Oakland chapter, who had suffered less from the media backlash of the Attorney General's report than their less image-conscious brother chapters, noticed that the police were constantly on their tail, making it almost impossible for them to go off on runs unmolested. When they did set off on their next Labour Day run to Bass Lake, a resort area north of Fresno, California, for a planned statewide get-together, they were followed all the way by police and their progress reported regularly in alarmist radio bulletins. Helicopters circled overhead and every time they stopped to refresh themselves or to replenish their bikes with petrol, they were searched and questioned. Ultimately, about a hundred riders, out of the four hundred or so Angels and members of other outlaw clubs who had left Oakland together, got through, only to be met by one hundred heavily armed National Guardsmen with dogs and all the latest electronic tracking equipment. They were immediately served with 'John Doe' summonses, calling for their appearance in a specially convened court to show why they shouldn't be restrained from ever coming back. They were then escorted to a small area of the resort and sealed off from the outside world by roadblocks and dog patrols. Furthermore, local bars and grocery stores had been forbidden, on threat of prosecution, to sell them either alcohol or food. When they finally pulled

out, after an uneventful two days of mild carousing, they were again escorted by the police and forced to leave a dozen of their members behind to clear up the campsite under the eye of forest rangers. The Angels, having suffered a very severe blow to their dignity, resolved there and then to steer as clear as humanly possible from any form of civilisation on future runs.

Nevertheless, by this time their reputation was so potent that all manner of people were beginning to see them where they weren't. Even after it became clear that they had nothing whatever to do with the Resada rape, one police officer involved in the case insisted that the suspects were really 'just like the Angels'. When rioting broke out a few months later at Laconia, New Hampshire, during the 44th Annual New England Motorcycle Rally, the local police stated at a press conference that it was all started by a handful of Hells Angels from California, and Mayor Peter Lessard said that he believed that they had been funded and trained in riot techniques by communist guerillas in Mexico. As Laconia is situated some two thousand miles from the Angels' base in southern California, it seems highly unlikely that they would have ridden across country especially to get mixed up in a riot and, of all those arrested at Laconia, none was found to be a member of the motorcycle club. The only offer of funding the Angels did receive was from an optimistic television producer eager to find out when they were making their next run to a small town, so that the cameras could be on hand to record the carnage. It is not recorded what reply they gave him ...

With uncharacteristic modesty, the Angels' spokesman, Sonny Barger, told a Los Angeles Times reporter, "I saw pictures

of the guys they claim were Angels and started the trouble (in New Hampshire). Why, one of those guys was wearing white jeans and his hair was cut as short as yours ... We didn't start that trouble ... As far as I know, only five of our members were there. How can five guys start a riot involving 15,000 people?" 96

It was as well that Barger was so modest because newspapermen and public officials were only too willing to credit the Angels with anything in which a motorcycle was involved.

Later on in the same year, there was a relatively minor outbreak of trouble at the annual National Motorcycle Races held at the Illinois State Fair in Springfield, Illinois, many miles from the Hells Angels' stronghold in southern California. Seventy bikers were subsequently arrested for a catalogue of drink/driving related offences, but nothing of a serious nature occurred until rumours began to circulate that a force of five hundred Angels had set off on a run, and that the run was heading straight for Springfield. Despite the fact that such a figure was wildly optimistic, even if one is inclined to accept Attorney General Lynch's unsubstantiated estimate of a total Hells Angels' statewide membership of four hundred, but nevertheless, the phantom Angels' run quickly became an alarming reality in the minds of the already paranoid Illinois State Police. So powerful was the Angels' reputation that even the most responsible of public officials were more than willing to believe that the Angels were coming in force to wreck their town.

Crowds thronged the streets of downtown Springfield, waiting to catch a glimpse of the Californian menace whose

capacity for hell-raising was well known. The more restless they became, the more trouble they caused, trouble which was fuelled by increasingly lurid rumours of the Angels' trek eastward. Jan Hudson, an on-the-spot observer, takes up the story:

"(The Angels) were said to have passed through Kansas, leaving a trail of panic behind them. Towns had been wrecked and farm girls carried off screaming on the backs of Angel hogs. Martial law had been declared in Kansas City as the invaders approached.

"None of it was true, but the rumours were given credence by local authorities and a massive counterforce was gathered to meet them. Illinois State Police Superintendent William H. Morris was in charge, and evidently he didn't believe in doing things by halves.

"Fifty state policemen were on hand, drawn up outside the police station. They had brought with them ten of the biggest, meanest-looking German Shepherd dogs ever seen north of Birmingham, Alabama. The dogs' size and dispositions so impressed the gathered cyclists that one of them remarked that they looked vicious enough to bite through even a pair of Hells Angel's originals to get at human flesh.

"In addition to the state police and their dogs and the regular Springfield police force, nearly a hundred and fifty auxiliary police in steel helmets, armed with baseball bats and thirty-eight calibre pistols, were waiting in Civil Defence trucks to be rushed into action.

"So 3,000 cyclists waited expectantly and 300 police were

at the ready, and no Angels appeared. There was a mixture of disappointment and relief when this realisation finally sank in. Everyone went on to the races and had a good time, but there were many who went home feeling that they had missed the best part of the show."⁹⁷

The Angels were even rumoured to be in the process of staging a several hundred strong run into the Watts area at the height of the black riots. According to one unnamed source they were accompanied by a 'makeshift armoured car' and were "going to show the niggers some class". Of course there wasn't a shred of truth in the rumour, but a little thing like that didn't stop the local radio station from putting out up-to-the-minute bulletins on their progress, deliberately creating widespread alarm and further fanning the flames of discontent:

"We interrupt this broadcast to bring you an important news bulletin. This station has received a report that a ... group of Hell's Angels have been seen heading down the Santa Ana Freeway. Reports say that they may be on their way to the riot area ...

"We have been informed that nearly a hundred Hell's Angels were seen near the interchange turning onto the Harbor Freeway heading for Watts." ⁹⁸

Why on earth they should have thought that the Angels would want to stick their necks in to that hornets' nest one finds it hard to imagine, but nevertheless it was broadcast to the people of the city as fact.

The Angels, sick and tired of all the adverse publicity pertaining to what they regarded as a perfectly harmless club

activity, sought to hold their runs as far away from the public spotlight as possible. But even then they were unable to avoid the inevitable repercussions which their appearance on the road in strength brought in its wake.

When the Angels picked the site for their 1966 annual run they were very careful indeed to select somewhere well away from the police and the public gaze. They did not want any spectators, less still spectators who used them as a focal point around which to start a riot. They chose a tiny fishing village named Collinsville, on the Sacramento river, fifty miles from San Francisco, where somewhat naively imagined that they would be left alone to enjoy their run in peace. Collinsville, boasting a population of just twenty-five, including one part-time sheriff, was quite happy to receive the Angels, and allocated them a secluded campsite on the outskirts of town, where even the most boisterous of Angels could do no harm. Hardly had they unloaded their bikes however, when without warning a dozen police cars arrived on the scene. Sixteen deputies and Highway Patrolmen leapt out brandishing shotguns, rifles and even a submachine-gun. They were told in no uncertain terms that the county would not tolerate a potential riot, and were immediately escorted out of the area. At first, the Angels planned on finding another, less unfriendly place to continue their party, but they found armed police waiting at every county line and at every city limit, who made it abundantly plain that there was no welcome invitation. Outnumbered and frustrated, the Angels returned to Oakland and sanctuary, their annual run an unmitigated disaster.

In 1965, at the behest of the National Institute of Mental Health, American sociologists Robert Shellow and Derek Roemer

undertook to study the phenomenon of the outlaw motorcycle club run and its impact, both on the host community and the agencies of law enforcement. They sought to establish whether or not police departments "with only limited experience in coping with large crowds" were adequately equipped to deal with "this growing threat to civil order". They posited the following two questions:

- 1/ "Can the approach and theories of social science be put to use in communities facing the threat or fact of civil disorder?
- 2/ Can social scientists study riot behaviour as it develops, while at the same time sharing the responsibilities for its prevention?" 99

However, when their research had been completed and the paper subsequently published, its focus was very different indeed. Entitled 'The Riot That Didn't Happen', it illustrated precisely how the community in question, Upper Marlboro, the county seat of Prince George's County, Maryland, was so overwhelmingly overcome by paranoia at the prospect of the appearance of a gang of rioting Hells Angels at its annual Labour Day motorcycle race meeting that it put into operation the most intensive of preparations, including the mass mobilisation of armed police and volunteers, to meet a rumoured threat which signally failed to materialise, and which wasn't even remotely indicated as being likely to occur in the first place.

"Our involvement (they write) in what later turned out to be six weeks of planning for riot prevention began as a casual conversation between one of the authors and a detective lieutenant. The news media had reported all the gory details of the Weir's Beach riot which followed the National Championship

motorcycle races near Laconia, New Hampshire. The first details of the July 4th resort riots were still Page One news. The lieutenant reported that shortly after the Weir's Beach episode three motorcyclists claiming to be 'Hell's Angels', were arrested and jailed for disorderly conduct by town policemen in Prince George's County. Angered by being forced to bathe for court, the cyclists threatened to return in force over Labor Day to 'tear up the County'.

"... (In spite of the fact that there was absolutely no evidence to support the veracity of the threat, or even to establish that those from whose lips the words were said to have emanated were in fact bona fide members of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club), we all agreed that (as) very little was known about the 'Hell's Angels' and how they were likely to behave among several thousand motorcyclists amassed for a big race. Our professional curiosity aroused, we offered to try to chase down the rumours, and bring the results of our inquiries back to the police. But two weeks of research failed to turn up as much as one Hell's Angel, though the rumours of invasion and destruction were persistent and proliferating." 100

As preparations for race day began in earnest, so too did police preparations for the coming 'invasion'. The issuing of an order cancelling the event was discussed by the Prince George County authorities, but it was decided that such a course of action could not be considered wise, instituted as it would be solely on the basis of uncorroberated rumours. Nevertheless, these self same uncorroberated rumours were acted upon as reliable sources of information by both the State and County Police forces who declared that it was their intention to adopt

a 'get tough' policy against any 'rowdy-looking types' they encountered. The forty-five man Civil Disturbance Unit, trained in riot control, were put on standby, and an elaborate communications network set up to link possible trouble spots. It was as if the police actually relished the thought of a full blooded confrontation with the 'Hells Angels', viewing it as a welcome opportunity to vanquish these celebrated folk devils where all before them had failed. And the local bikers, for their part, weren't at all averse to the thought of a battle between their own 'champions' and the forces of law and order, further fuelling the already virulent rumours with their own personal accounts of 'typical Angel behaviour' and taunting the police with threats of their impending downfall. Shellow and Roemer detail this process of psychological escalation immediately prior to the weekend of the races:

"Rumours of the arrival en masse of the Hell's Angels of California persisted through Saturday of the three-day weekend and were never clearly proved or disproved. However, we learned Hell's Angels were anticipated in resorts all the way from Ocean City, Maryland, 140 miles away, to the Pacific Coast. Three scattered locations (a tavern, the race track and a whole town) in Prince George's County were to be wrecked. All these rumours seemed to be circulating mostly among youth and motorcyclists. We began to see that the Hell's Angels were assuming a mythical character. They had become folk heroes, functioning both as vicarious examples of behaviour most youth could only fantasy (unless swept away in mob activity), and as legendary champions who could come to the rescue of the oppressed and persecuted. An older motorcyclist, witnessing

police harassment of his fellows at a town outside Prince George's County, was heard to remark, 'Just wait 'til the Angels hear about this when they come in tomorrow. They'll come down here and tear this place apart'." 101

In the event, the weekend went ahead virtually trouble free. There were one or two impromptu fires started in the camping area which necessitated action by the fire brigade, some minor scuffles broke out between groups of 'short hairs', primed up to expect a wholesale invasion, and drunken racegoers, and a potential bar fight which never actually achieved fruition. All in all, the 1965 Prince George's County Labour Day motorcycle races passed off with no greater problems than they had done in previous years, with the single, but important exception, that local youths, assuming the role of protectors of the community, required increased vigilance on the part of the police to prevent them from physically attacking the 'alien invaders'.

"Often the locals, including the authorities, contributed to the developing cohesion by perceiving the visitors as a homogenous mass, attributing negative characteristics to them as a class, labelling them, e.g. as 'hoodlums' or 'young punks', and then treating them accordingly ... Several reports of disturbances attributed careful pre-planning to a small cadre of dedicated instigators, who allegedly circulated rumours before the event and selected targets on the scene." 102

It is not established that any bona fide members of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club of California were in attendance during the weekend, but if there were any individual Angels present, they certainly played no part in any of the incidents

mentioned above. Indeed, Shellow and Hoerner believe that bikers who were said by the police to have been seen sporting the familiar Hells Angels insignia on the backs of their jackets, were in fact local inhabitants of Prince George's County who had brought them back as souvenirs of a Californian trip and "traded (them) around from one ... to another, each taking his turn as a 'Hell's Angel' ..., enjoying all the rights and privileges attendant thereto." They continue, "One suspects that even respectable enthusiasts found attractive as well as abhorrent elements in the outlaw image, even though they resented and suffered from its indiscriminate application to all motorcyclists by the general public.

"... None of the persons wearing Hell's Angels insignia who were arrested in the County gave California addresses. In any case there were less than ten people in the entire crowd (numbering some several thousand) wearing such insignia."103

It is not entirely surprising then, that the two sociologists who travelled to Prince George's County to study a riot, were forced to dramatically change the focus of their report. There were no Hells Angels and there was no riot, and what is more, there was never a single shred of verifiable information to support the assumption that there would be. It was a classic case of paranoia, engendered and sustained by a combination of a media contriving to increase the sales of newspapers by deliberately propagating rumours of an outlaw invasion; a police force with a Lone Ranger complex, itching to make a name for themselves as the officers who tamed the Hells Angels; a local citizenry who convinced themselves that their town was about to be laid siege to by lawless elements; and vicarious outlaw motorcyclists who, whilst not having the slightest inclination to actually become full-time outlaws

were nevertheless more than happy to adopt the outlaw mantle for a single weekend. If the Angels didn't turn up to entertain them, then they would just go out and do it for themselves, each group playing its ascribed role in the proceedings.

Precisely whereabouts the Hells Angels did choose to hold their 1965 Labor Day run is not recorded, but it is an incontrovertible fact that it was nowhere in the vicinity of Prince George's County, Maryland. And, notwithstanding the belief nurtured by many, apparently disappointed, inhabitants, that despite all the evidence to the contrary, they had actually undergone an invasion by the notorious Hells Angels, "the citizens and their property emerged almost unscathed, the races and field events were held. (And) the campers drank, dragged and scuffled undisturbed for a longer period than any of them probably expected."¹⁰⁴

Such trouble as did take place amongst the 'hooligan element' in the crowd appeared to be more or less directly proportionate to its perceived 'audience value'. In other words, all the time that units of police and sightseers were in attendance, there was drunken brawling and other rowdy behaviour, including exhibitions of high-spirited riding, resulting in several accidents. As the spectators tired of the show and returned to their homes, or were moved on by the police, and the audience diminished, so the rowdy behaviour subsided and the 'hooligan element' returned to the trackside to watch the races. As Shellow and Roemer conclude:

"If unhindered ... , the hoodlum element sooner or later

would have left the camping area and sought glory and reputation in new arenas, before new audiences. These seem to be people who need and seek the stimulation of collective action, excitement, and violence. Without it they become depressed and demoralised. They have an affinity for the romantic role of outlaw, which is perhaps the only status in which they feel they can stand out as individuals. In it they approach the dramatic, larger-than-life identity of the mythic Hell's Angel. And only the self-justifying power of mob action could support such a heroic identity for youths such as these." 105

Jan Hudson, in his book 'The Sex and Savagery of the Hell's Angels', cites a similar example of an Angel run which never took place engendering anti-social behaviour amongst a large number of decidedly non-outlaw motorcycle race goers, this time at Laconia, New Hampshire, scene of a previous 'biker riot'. The word was that plans had been laid by the Angels to ride en masse to Laconia with the declared intention of creating widespread civil disturbance amongst the visiting biker population. Well in advance of the start of the races, a "large, restless crowd was standing around just waiting for something to happen - or perhaps waiting for the arrival of the Hell's Angels, which was predicted at any minute.

"Rumour had it that 400 of the Angels were on their way from California. They were reported headed east along Route 66. One story said that they had passed through New Mexico, leaving Tucumcari in ruins. They were supposedly passing through Oklahoma, leaving a trail of destruction and rubble behind them. Another report even had it that the Army had turned out tanks from Fort Leonard Wood to save Missouri.

"But at ten o'clock that night, the crowd apparently got

tired of waiting for their models from California to arrive and decided to take things into their own hands. One cyclist is reported to have shouted, 'Come on, we don't have to wait for the Angels to show us how to wreck a town!'" 106

The ensuing riot involved some two thousand motorcyclists and lasted more than five hours, bringing Laconia's commercial centre to a complete standstill, and necessitating the mobilisation of a company of the National Guard who were handily camped nearby in preparation for the arrival of the Angels. They charged into town aboard armoured half-tracked vehicles, and proceeded to advance on the rioting mob with bayonets fixed. It would appear that they too had heard the stories about the Hells Angels capacity for violence. Fortunately, for all concerned, a bloodbath was averted by the local police who, acting with a much greater degree of self-control, speedily rounded up the ringleaders, succeeding in averting further trouble. Not one Hells Angel member was either arrested or identified as having been involved in any way in the mayhem. In fact, none were officially reported to have been seen anywhere near Laconia that weekend. And yet, the authorities, in a desperate search to find a plausible explanation for the flare-up, persisted in fuelling the totally unfounded speculation that it was the Angels who were really to blame. Hudson records some of the various statements made in the wake of the riot:

"Harold Knowlton, the Weirs Beach police chief, was reported by Life Magazine to have 'blamed the riot on a contingent of California's notorious Hell's Angels cycling club'. 'We knew they were around and that they had taken over a town out west, but they were not going to do it here.'

"Laconia's police chief, Capt. Robert C. Abbott, was quoted

as blaming the riot 'very heavily on the Hell's Angels'. He described them as the lowest form of animals and said he didn't have a man on his force who wasn't suffering from bumps and bruises because the Angels had been 'throwing rocks as big as grapefruit'.

"The Commissioner of Safety, Robert W. Rhodes, was quoted as saying 'A Californian motorcycle club known as Hell's Angels started the riot ... They (the club members) threw a ring around the whole area'. He said, 'They wouldn't let anybody get away. The thing blew up in our faces in minutes after that.' ...

"... Mayor Peter Lessard will never believe otherwise despite the fact that has has narry an Angel in his jail. 'A handful of Californians who call themselves Hell's Angels were to blame,' he stated. 'We believed that they were trained in riot techniques in Mexico for just such occasions. We would like to know if there are Communists behind it all.'" 107

If these ludicrous statements were to be beleived, then the mythical Californian Hells Angels of the time would have had to have boasted a membership of thousands, and spent the major part of their waking hours occupied in the planning and execution of costly long distance runs to faraway places, with the sole aim and intention of offering themselves as willing candidates for arrest and imprisonment, or worse. This is of course a most absurd contention. True, the Angels and their brother outlaw clubs were going off on runs, and getting arrested, but certainly not of their own volition. The plethora of adverse publicity which accrued to this particular activity coast to coast was beginning to weigh heavily on the shoulders of the outlaws, and they were forced to consider strongly the

advisability of abandoning one of their central social rituals in favour of stay-at-home parties hosted in turn by different chapters at their urban clubhouses, where relations with the local police were somewhat less strained. The run, if one can excuse the pun, appeared to have run its course, the outlaws' collective mobility having been all but curtailed through a combination of police activity and public outrage. Clubs travelling in numbers beyond the confines of their home territory found it prudent to stagger their membership in small groups, rendezvousing later at a pre-arranged destination. The visible wearing of club colours was also extremely inadvisable, unless the riders were prepared to run a time-consuming and potentially explosive gauntlet of local and state police road-blocks. And, assuming that they were to reach their agreed destination intact, having successfully managed to avoid detection en route, there remained the possibility of their being attacked, a la Easy Rider, by a band of 'concerned citizens' whilst they camped. Plus, supplies of food and alcohol from local townships would be virtually unobtainable at any price, and back roads stragglers, separated from their comrades, ran the ever present risk of being picked off for sport by shotgun wielding red-necks in pick-up trucks. By 1967, the traditional club run had merged itself into one or other of the annual massed bikers' gatherings held at Daytona, Laconia or Sturgis, where tens of thousands of riders, through sheer force of numbers, were left alone to party the weekend away on specially designated sites. In actual fact, these towns were not at all averse to the yearly influx of bikers. They experienced little in the way of real trouble from their visitors, and both the city fathers and foresighted tradespeople were more than happy to receive the revenue that they brought with them. Even then though, the trip to and from

these sanctuaries could prove to be eventful, the bikers being forced to plan their routes carefully in order to avoid likely 'trouble spots'.

Today, though stories continue to abound about their past misdeeds, outlaw motorcycle club runs raise few eyebrows amongst either the press or the general public. The outlaws, for their part, are not keen to attract attention to their presence, preferring to keep their distance from centres of population. And local townspeople, in return, are content to steer well clear of the bikers, except perhaps to supply them with provisions.

Those places which had traditionally hosted the more important American Motorcycle Association sanctioned race meetings, and who once did everything in their power to discourage the presence of the outlaw 'hoodlum element', appear to have resigned themselves to the idea that, whether they like it or not, they have become, and will continue to be, a mecca for bikers from all over North America. The big difference now though is that the overwhelming majority of those bikers who trek their way year after year, cruising along main street and filling the bars, are no longer the clean cut A.M.A. type race-goers of yesteryear, but the 'non law abiding one per cent of motorcyclists' - the outlaws.

Communities like Daytona, Laconia and Sturgis, now regularly attract upwards of a quarter of a million bikers apiece to their annual 'bike weeks' and publicly and loudly defend their two-wheeled clientele, without whose freely spent dollars their civic budgets would show a severe deficit. The cops are prepared to overlook minor infringements of the law, relating mainly to non-compliance of vehicle codes, which

differ from state to state, and seldom have to deliver more than a cautionary word to the more boisterous of the revellers. Inevitably, as with any large scale influx of merry making visitors, friction is occasioned from time to time, but it is extremely rare that any persons are arrested or charged with offences of a serious nature. Strange as it may seem, towns which boast large public camping areas often vie with each other for the bikers' patronage, eager to earn a quick buck from people who, unlike well-heeled tourists, aren't too bothered about what sort of a return they get on their money.

A good example of this dramatic change of attitude towards having outlaw club runs in the vicinity occurred in June 1983, when more than two hundred Hells Angels, from thirteen different chapters together with their wives and families, openly declared in a press release their intention to hold a "convergence of Hells Angels like that never before experienced in the 35-year history of our club."¹⁰⁸ Not only that, but the Angels would also allow reporters access to the proceedings for an 'inside look'.

"We've never done this before," said Dutch Schultz, the San Diego club president. "We're offering a firsthand look into the real Hells Angels and not this Hollywood stuff you see all the time.

"It gives an opportunity for the media to come into the campsite for the first time ever and shake hands with people, strike up a conversation, to see we're not just a bunch of people that get drunk, break things and fight each other."¹⁰⁹

The occasion was the Angels' annual Fourth of July run, and their chosen destination was Cuyamaca State Park near Descanso, Colorado. At this time, the Angels were caught up in the middle of a massive federal racketeering case which threatened to expose the club as a conspiratorial criminal organisation geared to the widespread manufacture, distribution and sale of narcotic drugs. (All accused Hells Angel members were subsequently acquitted). Having received intensive headline publicity for several weeks prior to the run, the Angels fully expected that they would be turned away from the camping grounds by Colorado State Police in anticipation of their causing trouble to the local community, and they were determined to strike the first blow in what they imagined would be a struggle to go through with their run. The influential Los Angeles Times took up the challenge, demanding that the Angels be barred from entering the resort. As the newspaper mounted its campaign, a succession of dire warnings were delivered concerning the likelihood of a severe breakdown of law and order if the run were to be allowed to go ahead. Banner headlines like 'Hell's Angels Scare Off Campers At Park', told how dozens of cancellations had been received from "other potential campers who found out who their weekend neighbours would be." 110 But the rangers at Cuyamaca Rancho State Park stoutly defended their decision to permit the Angels to use their facilities, stating that "the outlaw motorcycle club (have) reserved a campsite in the Green Valley Falls area of the park 'in the usual manner' and have 'the same right to be here as anyone else'." 111 Said Sheriff's Sergeant Sam Miranda:

"If it is a nice weekend, perhaps they will enjoy themselves

and keep it to a low roar ... There is no indication they are going to do anything other than go up there and camp, just like any other group of motorcycle people." 112

He added that, although they were ready and equipped to respond to any situation, no additional deputies were to be deployed for the weekend and no special precautions taken to receive their notorious guests. A spokeswoman for Chief Cuyumaca Ranger Steven Treanor, felt confident enough about the peaceful outcome of the weekend to state in an interview with the San Diego Union that:

"The club obtained their camping tickets ... like other campers. They also presented themselves to the headquarters and advised us they were coming, at which time a meeting was set up so rules and regulations could be reviewed with them ...

"We are aware they are seeking as much publicity as possible, to improve their image, because they are trying hard to do that." 113

Sheriff's Sergeant Miranda, speaking to the San Diego Tribune, added:

"We're taking the attitude that we're just going to monitor what's going on ... We don't anticipate any problems.

"The club members will be mainly from Southern California and because the outing will include wives and children, they'll probably be pretty mellow.

"For a while now, the Hell's Angels has been trying to change its image." 114

Not a trace of paranoia here. No hysterical outpourings

about town-wrecking marauders or Communist backed terrorism. In spite of the fact that the Hells Angels were publicly branded by government prosecutors as Mafia-style criminals, it seems that the American population and the bikers had at last come to terms with one another, even to the extent of local law enforcement agencies putting themselves out on a limb with the federal authorities to defend the outlaws' civil rights.

The Angels themselves hotly denied the allegation that they were deliberately attempting to clean up their public image, pointing out that they had enjoyed excellent relations on runs for years. They maintained that any bad feeling was due entirely to the government's well-orchestrated campaign to blacken their name and use them as a high profile scapegoat to mask its inability to come to terms with an ever escalating crime-orientated drug problem. Declared Schultz:

"The law still is the enemy in the eyes of the Angels, old and new.

"The government has united in a conspiracy to eliminate us ... They have stereotyped us in the public eye as socially unfit, dope-dealing, drug-crazed dopers and murderers, denied us our rights and imprisoned our leaders ...

"We have lawyers, businessmen, people from all walks of life as members. Our get-up may be different on the weekends, that's about it.

"We are a motorcycle club, and that's it ... Take away our cycles and there would be no Hells Angels. We don't think people really know us as we are ... The residents need not

fear trouble from the club's gathering, it's the last thing we want. Some of our members will have ridden 800 miles on a motorcycle for twelve hours to get there."¹¹⁵

Predictably, the Angels' biggest ever run went off without a hitch, the outlaws proving themselves to be exemplary campers. The press hysteria surrounding the event, and the dire warnings delivered by various federal agencies, eventually pressurised Summit County Sheriff Bob Farris to draft in scores of extra officers from surrounding townships to bolster his own twenty-two strong deputy force, and the nearby fashionable ski resort of Frisco battened down the hatches. But the one single occasion that the police were called upon to enter the site was when the rangers assisted with the delivery of fresh supplies of beer to the thirsty bikers. As for the townspeople, they had no complaints at all. According to Mary Winnale, kitchen manager at Smokin' Willies's, a saloon that was paid ten thousand dollars in advance to supply food to the Angels during their stay, "They're real polite, a lot better than the skiers who come in during the winter."¹¹⁶ The San Diego Tribune summed up the trouble-free weekend:

"Their arrival prompted apprehension and anticipation ...

"The apprehension proved groundless and the anticipation was mostly from bar, restaurant, motel, liquor and grocery store owners looking for a share of the tens of thousands of off-season dollars that the bikers (would) spend during their ... run.

"The best behaved Angels really left their impressive mark with some backcountry folks.

"They've really got it together', said Sara Pinkston, who was operating the cash register at ... Raintree Market on State 79. 'They caused no trouble. I have had to call the sheriff today, but it wasn't for the Angels. Just some teenagers raising hell.'

"From 13 chapters throughout California, they arrived in rural San Diego County yesterday, complete with a Highway Patrol escort, for what has become their annual Fourth of July pilgrimage south.

"Into the serenity of the Cuyamaca State Park they roared, 200 strong, revving their Harley Haws, ponytails to the wind, bodies ablaze with tattoos and slogans, mamas hanging on their old men - all of them dressed in the Levi and leather uniform of the day.

"These were the Hells Angels, and it was hard to believe these were the same wild marauders once tagged as society's renegades.

"Here were the terrible Angels holding a sit-down news conference, of all things. They handed out news releases, sold Hells Angels T-shirts, promoted a new Hells Angels movie, granted far-ranging interviews and extolled the virtues of what they all claim is a club changing its image ...

"But this trip stood out in the club's often tumultuous 35-year history.

"We are here to set the record straight', said Johnny Angel, 45. He has been a Hells Angel since 1959, through the years when authorities accused the club of murder, rape, rioting and assorted drug-related dealings.

"That image of the Angels is all made up by the press and the law," said Angel as he escorted press reporters into the park enclave set aside for the three-day campout. "Come on in and see for yourself."

"Inside Cuyamaca Park, they were camped in neat pup tents, their chrome-laden motorcycles gleaming in the sunlight.

"It could have been just another Sunday picnic. Angel and his mama - the word they use for girlfriend or wife - were sitting down to a Sunday breakfast of sausage, eggs, potatoes, coffee, toast and beer as the press toured the grounds.

"In one area, top members of the club, from national president Sonny Barger to San Diego chapter head Doug Schultz, sat at a long table for what they said was a first - a Hells Angels news conference.

"To one side, mamas such as San Diegan Jackie Edwards, 39, sold Angels T-shirts, at 10 a pop. Money from the shirts, which proclaimed that 'Hells Angels Are American', will be used for the legal fund being amassed to hire lawyers to fight various government criminal cases against the club, Edwards said.

"Pictures of the Angels and their bikes dotted the wall of a nearby camper.

"On the hills above the press briefing, other Angels quietly watched the gathering below.

"And on another nearby hill were sheriff's deputies under the command of Sgt. Jack Tyberg, the Pine Valley resident in charge.

"We have a few extra deputies on duty, but nothing big."

Tyberg said. 'And we have had absolutely no trouble. But we are watching.'

" ... When the press briefing ended about 12.30pm, reporters and camera crews were individually escorted out of the campgrounds.

"Last night, the Angels held a private party at the state park. 'We just don't have the facilities to invite you to stay', said one, refusing to allow some more adventurous reporters to stick around.

"Today, they were to roar out of San Diego the same way as they roared in - riding two abreast in the fast lane of Interstate 8, with another Highway Patrol escort.

"'On the trip down here from Oakland, we were the only ones doing 55,' said Johnny Angel, smiling. 'People were passing us doing 80.'"¹¹⁷

It is not of course contended that all latter-day outlaw club runs pass off entirely without incident. They are very far from being tea parties attended by genteel folks nibbling cucumber sandwiches whilst listening to recitals of chamber music. On the contrary, runs are often extremely wild, brash, and sometimes violent affairs, in the course of which noses will be bloodied, vast quantities of drugs and drink consumed, and neighbours disturbed by loud nocturnal revelry. But, by and large, the outlaws are careful not to physically intrude upon members of the host community, and fight shy of run-ins with the police. Because of all the adverse publicity which such events have, rightly or wrongly, attracted in the past, and the subsequent reluctance of many landowners/local authorities to willingly provide camping facilities, clubs who receive a friendly and sympathetic reception at a particular location will deliberately

go out of their way not to tarnish their image, thus ensuring that they might stand a chance of rebooking the site for future runs. Also bearing in mind the massive increase in both communication and co-operation between local and state police forces and sheriff's departments during the past twenty years, clubs which get a bad name in one area are very unlikely to get turned away from sites in other areas, the word having been passed on that their presence spells trouble. Such publicity is to be avoided wherever possible. Many of the incidents which do serve to sour relations between travelling outlaw clubs and members of the public do not involve major clubs, like the Angels, Outlaws, or Banditos, but concern minor, more transient clubs, whose membership may take advantage of well-publicised skirmishes simply to make a name for themselves. Naturally enough, when such trouble does break out, it almost always receives widespread attention from the media, the club concerned very often being euphemistically described by the generic and extremely newsworthy name, Hells Angels. This further adds to the already vast fund of stories of outrageous behaviour attributable to the Angels of the mythical variety, further exasperating the real Angels with a reputation to live down. Paradoxically, as the Angels also have an image to live up to, as the roughest toughest outlaw bike club of them all, they are caught in a cleft stick of their own making. If they were to make vociferous denials each and every time that their club name is used to describe bikers involved in violent incidents, they might well succeed in convincing the general public of their non-involvement, but at the same time they would run the risk of being seen to be 'going soft' by other clubs competing for their crown of notoriety. Thus, unless the incident in question is considered by the Angels to be of such seriousness as to threaten their collective wellbeing, they tend

to keep quiet and sort out the club concerned at a later date, well away from the public gaze. The result of this reluctance of the Angels to speak out in their own defence, is that the police and the public view their silence as being tantamount to an admission of guilt on their part, and consequently, the total number of incidents ascribed to them by news-hungry journalists, unable or unwilling to differentiate between one club back-patch and another, grows annually at an alarming rate.

It is probably also true to say that the very widespread reporting of what usually turn out to be relatively minor incidents involving bikers, or for that matter non-bikers who might just happen to look the part, in which the participants are erroneously described as Hells Angels, has the effect of casting all motorcyclists as villainous thugs, leading to the cancellation of a whole host of entirely innocuous events, still further adding to the Angels' unwholesome reputation. In order to get round these problems, the Angels, on an international basis, have progressively involved themselves in the organisation of mass biker runs, such as the England chapters' Kent Custom Bike Show or the Australian Angels' Broadford rock festival, where other friendly outlaw clubs are invited to come along and enjoy the party, the Angels acting to ensure the non-disturbance of the surrounding community. Such events have proved to be a resounding success, having not only succeeded in smoothing out relations with the local police and the public, but also enhancing the Angels' credibility within the biker subculture.

For the federal law enforcement agencies of the American government however, the traditional practice of outlaw clubs to take off on long distance runs is perceived as being a continuing and very real problem. In the October 1982 Law Enforcement

Bulletin, and subsequently republished in the British Metropolitan Police traffic magazine 'Clearway', the Federal Bureau of Investigation make no bones about the undesirability of this phenomenon. An article penned by Special Agent Roger H. Davis of the Behavioural Science Unit of the F.B.I. Academy outlines the reasons underlying his department's concern. Wrapped up in a piece of ill-thought-out nonsense about "the perceptions citizens have of the dangers posed by gangs in their communities", is the key to the real fear of the F.B.I. regarding the bikers, that is their mobility. I quote:

"The high degree of mobility of outlaw gangs is a hinderance to police agencies to keep track of and sort out the complex criminal connections among gangs and gang members. Outlaw rallies (runs) and funerals are attended by gang members from various parts of the country, making it difficult to identify individuals of police interest. These gatherings also provide opportunities for gang members to extend their criminal, as well as their social, networks.

"The connections between members of diverse gangs are being used to perpetuate and extend the flow of contraband and to further other criminal activity. The mobility of many individuals connected with motorcycle gangs is well-documented in police files. In fact, some gangs have formed chapters, called nomads, where members do not belong to clubs in a specific city but are members of a chapter of transients."118

Let us examine this statement closely. Firstly, and most obviously, it is to my mind absolutely inconceivable that "groups and gang members ... from various parts of the country" would find it necessary to make use of "rallies or funerals" in order

to extend their "criminal networks". Whilst it is certainly true to say that some members of clubs may be engaged in activities of a criminal or quasi-criminal nature at any given time, the very idea that they should utilise such high-visibility gatherings which are, as even the F.B.I. is forced to admit, closely monitored at all times by federal, state and local law enforcement agencies, as a means of extending those criminal activities, is patently absurd. Individuals, of whatever ilk, who regularly participate with others in criminal ventures are most unlikely indeed to want to advertise their doings in such a public fashion, even amongst fellow bikers, who may or may not approve of such ventures. Crime, particularly the organised variety, is highly dependent upon secrecy to avoid detection, and those engaged in it who, in the furtherance of mutual criminal interests, need to confer with associates in other parts of the country, are hardly likely to do so in mass gatherings where the threat of search and arrest by the police is ever present. On the contrary, such contacts are made singly, in private, in far less ostentatious surroundings where the risk of detection can be minimised.

Secondly, outlaw club runs and funerals are, in the main, uniquely private affairs, participation in which is restricted to members of one particular club, or constituent chapters of that club. And, bearing in mind that club members and chapters are in regular and highly routinised day-to-day contact with one another via a system of formal and informal networks of communication, the likelihood of those individuals wishing to discuss pressing criminal matters waiting for up to six months at a time for a run to occur or, more remotely still, for a funeral is, to say the very least, a somewhat questionable assumption.

Thirdly, the notion that those participating in a highly visible run on a public highway, aboard stripped-down motorcycles, shadowed by the Highway Patrol, and subject to regular police checks, should be happily carrying negotiable 'contraband' concealed about their persons, is frankly laughable.

And finally, whilst there are outlaw clubs, or particular chapters of outlaw clubs, who display the word 'Nomads' on the bottom rocker of their colours, this is in no way whatever used to indicate that the wearers belong to a 'chapter or transients'. Throughout the course of my research, I have never once come across a reference to such a club. True, there are many individual non-aligned outlaw bikers who live a transient lifestyle, but motorcycle clubs, by their very nature, do not allow for such behaviour. The term 'nomads' is merely used to denote that the wearer has an affinity to a nomadic way of life. It is perhaps an indication of a romantic ideal of life on the road that the outlaws hold dear, but the practicalities of formal club membership however dictate that all constituent chapters are firmly centred upon a well-established territorial base. Members will very often travel quite far afield in large, sometimes chapter sized groups (although such numbers could vary from as few as six - the minimum number of members required to form a Hells Angels chapter - to well over a hundred), for runs, funerals, parties, custom shows, swap meets, anti-helmet protests, etc., etc., or merely to socialise in the company of an allied chapter, but they will always return to their home base afterwards to continue their routine club activities. The fact that the "mobility of many individuals connected with motorcycle 'gangs' is well-documented in police files" is not disputed. It comes as no surprise to learn that, given their prior assumptions regarding the darker motives which underlie the bikers' desire

to travel, socialise and attend each others' funerals, the police spend a good deal of their time observing, recording and collating information concerning their movements. As the subculture itself is specifically organised around an object of mobility, the motorcycle, and members of the subculture, be they connected with motorcycle 'gangs' or not, regard it as very much a matter of peer group pride to cover very high mileages and attend as many biker related events as is physically possible during the riding season, the fact that they appear to be in almost constant motion is hardly remarkable in itself. Furthermore, because the major gatherings of the motorcycling calendar, where attendance is virtually obligatory for any 'proper' biker, are held in different parts of the country, at different times, thousands of miles apart, it is small wonder that they are seen, singly or in groups in a state of mobility, especially when we allow for the fact that travelling bikers, wearing colours and riding loud, gaudy choppers cannot exactly merge into the scenery. It would be interesting to enquire whether or not police files are equally full of well-documented examples of the mobility of other, less visible, social groupings, and, in particular, overtly crime-related groupings, whose long distance criminal activities might occasion the need for travel by car, bus, train or plane.

In fact, it is the bikers sheer capacity to indulge in non-traceable patterns of mobility, rather than their proven involvement in instances of widespread, routinised law-breaking, that seems to alarm the federal law enforcement agencies. The F.B.I., in particular, has succeeded in heightening this paranoia by disseminating vast amounts of 'information' regarding the social/criminal activities of outlaw bikers to police forces and sheriff's departments throughout the United States and overseas. Euphemistically described as 'crime reports', they are composed

mainly of inaccurate and wholly unverifiable conjecture grounded upon a factual background twenty years out of date and peppered with quotes from pulp fiction, but nevertheless are accepted as fact by the recipient bodies. Instructions about how to prevent or impede club runs occupy many pages of these reports, and are taken as the basis of instructional manuals for operational police duties. I shall quote at length from one such article which appeared in the May 1982 edition of Police Product News, the official journal of the Association of United States Sheriff's Departments, giving instructions on how officers should set about tackling an outlaw run passing through their territory:

"If the cops are the Good Guys, it's hard to imagine a more archetypical Bad Guy than the outlaw motorcyclist ...

"A biker who isn't 'caught dirty' will usually go out of his way to be courteous to an officer, but won't hesitate to make a life-threatening assault on the policeman if caught with drugs, guns, or other contraband that could send him to jail. The officer should always be extremely careful with these people as they tend to use heavy and ingenious weapons, according to F.L.F.T.C. (Federal Law Enforcement Training Centre) information.

"Most officers by now have been warned about the outlaw trick of converting a handlebar to a shotgun barrel. Beginning in 1972, this was done crudely: the outer end of the handlebar was replaced with a threaded tube, which held a 12-gauge shotgun shell lightly against a homemade firing pin. A snappy twist of the wrist screwed the tube down on the pin, causing the shell to discharge (and presumably the firer to rapidly disappear off his bike in the opposite direction). Any policeman approaching a motorcycle should watch for open ends in the handlebars, and keep an eye out for someone who seems to be aiming a handlebar

at the officer, or 'lining him up' with the rearview mirror
(prior to executing a mobile on-the-spot ninety degree turn and
and shooting him?).

"Bikers have definitely become more sophisticated in the
last decade. As soon as they learned that the cops had discovered
the 'shotgun in the handlebars' trick, and would instantly order
a biker to take his hands off the controls, they developed
solenoid-operated mechanisms that allowed the biker to fire with
a nudge of his knee against the side of the bike, even though
his hands were raised. Shotguns have also been built into exhaust
pipes (This appears to be a deliberate misuse of the biker term
'shot-gun pipes', which describes a parallel pair of high-level,
un-silenced, custom motorcycle exhaust pipes, commonly fitted to
Harley-Davidson choppers.), and removable 'sissy bars' sharpened
into spears have been used in homicidal stabbings.

"Bikers take a special interest in weapons. While inner city
gangs consider the 15-shot 9mm automatics and .357 Magnum
revolvers the 'in guns', the preferred pistol among outlaw
bikers seems to be the .45 automatic ... Many have a preference
for shotguns and especially fully automatic weapons, particularly
the M-16 ...

"The outlaw bikers ... stand for many things the rest of us
don't associate with Americanism. For instance, they tend to be
heavily racist. Most clubs are all-white; black clubs are all-
black, and clubs allowing Chicanos tend to be primarily Chicano.
And all of them are anti-female ...

"You can't fight an enemy you don't understand, so if you
think you'll ever face an outlaw biker, you need a crash course
in the unique mentality of the one-percenter. Before anything

their loyalty is to the club, including their own life. Picture Moonies with guns, if you will ... They know if they do well in a fight, they'll be honoured by other bikers; if they're hurting, there's always plenty of drugs at the clubhouse to numb the pain.

"There's a rigidly enforced pecking order within almost every one-percenter club, and to disobey an order from 'the Prez' a member can be ostracised, suffer a savage beating, or even be killed. The word of the hierarchy is law. In many clubs, one only becomes a full-fledged member after committing a serious felony in front of other members ... Many such clubs also demand that a fledgling member sign over everything he owns to the club in order to prove his allegiance to the organisation.

"Initiation to full membership is often an ordeal in degradation. Typically, fully-fledged members will urinate or defecate on the 'pledges', and in one Western club, male members must submit to anal sex with a large male dog. (It is not specified which party is on the receiving end of the union) ...

"Female members, or 'mamas' must submit to group sex, and are often submitted to gross physical indignities. Those who become the exclusive property of a given member gain the slightly higher status of 'old ladies', but may be traded like chattels for drugs or motorcycles ...

"The highest social events among one-percenters are 'runs'; caravans for camping vacations conducted en masse, with all members wearing their 'colors', or club insignia. The run is a reflection of life in an outlaw club, in that each member has a specific position in the caravan, according to his status within the organisation.

"It is particularly important for the officer to understand this relative positioning, since the day may come when he is responsible for stopping and checking a group of outlaw bikers on the run. To speak to anyone in a low position of authority within the club is a waste of time; the officer will probably receive a blank stare or noncommittal answer. The policeman must approach those who speak for the club.

"In the front of the caravan will be two key men. The club president, or 'prez', usually rides in front at the left. Normally the club spokesman, he defers his authority to the 'run captain', who leads the caravan on the right. This person has been carefully selected for, among other things, a clean record and an ability to diplomatically handle policemen. He often carries the club's bail money, never carries contraband, and makes it a point to be immune from arrest. On a run he is often the key man to talk to.

"Behind these two club officers will be a group of 'regular' members, often riding in precision drill formation. The Sergeant at Arms rides at the right rear of this group, and behind him comes another formation of probationary members. Behind them, in a third close squadron, are honorary members, people who get them dope and money and safe houses, and are thus conferred a sort of hanger-on status. If the club is large enough, an Enforcer rides at the rear.

"Any run of good size will be accompanied by a 'crash car'. This may be a sedan or station waggon, but is more often a van, and in the case of big clubs, may be an 18-wheel tractor trailer. This vehicle carries dope, spare motorcycle parts, booze and usually a stockpile of weapons...

"... It is imperative that you stop the crash car if you intend to safely stop the entire run for a check. You'll need good intelligence (sic) to spot this vehicle, which is often driven by clean-cut, straight-looking males, or by females. You may want to be in touch with other agencies along the route, since the night before, the crash car will usually have stopped with the rest of the run, and will have been identified by local investigators if they've been alerted.

"Parkhurst (an F.B.I. Special Agent), and other intelligence officers specializing in one-percenter gangs, have noted certain brutal realities that have to be dealt with. One is that, since most outlaw bikers are extremely chauvinistic towards women, it is reasonable to expect them to react with hostility if confronted with a female 'authority figure' in a police uniform. Accordingly, officers making an initial stop should probably all be males.

"Also, the Nazi regalia many one-percenters wear does not represent simply an emblem of non-conformity, as is commonly believed; many wear that stuff because they are white racists, and will often react violently towards a black officer when they might have been subservient to a white officer. Therefore, some experts (sic) believe an initial contact with a white gang run should be made by a contingent of all-white male officers ... Unpalatable as they seem to the modern police officer, these steps are likely to reduce potential violence during an initial encounter.

"'If there is anything these people respect,' says Parkhurst, 'it is police officers who are firm but fair, and who are represented in force. A department that intends to bring a run of bikers to a halt without bloodshed should plan on having at least one fully armed officer for every two bikers. This is

also a good ratio for patrol officers stopping small groups of one-percenters.'

"Those officers might also want to be armed with something more substantial than service revolvers ... Parkhurst reports that ... half of the bikers stopped for interrogation were wearing concealed, soft boy armour. This was primarily because they feared attacks by rival gang members, but such vests also stop most conventional handgun bullets and buckshot. Officers anticipating trouble when stopping a run (and after reading that lot it would be surprising indeed if there were any officers left who didn't anticipate trouble) should perhaps be issued rifle-slug loads (solid flat-nosed shells) for their shotguns. This would be an ideal mission for light, .223 caliber semi- or fully-automatic assault rifles, since soft-nose .223 bullets will easily penetrate soft armour and neutralise the wearer, but have enough explosive expansion that they won't always exit a non-armoured offender's body.

"Officers should also be aware that many one-percenters are taking 'anti-police' measures. Some sew fish-hooks onto the outside seams of their jeans, to rip the hands of police officers frisking them. Others festoon their sleeveless denim jackets with patches, many of which are open at the top to create pouches that can hide small handguns or caches of narcotics. The wearing of belt-buckle knives is widespread, as is the use of elastic 'stash pouches' around the thigh or calf, which can contain small pistols.

"One-percenters commonly booby-trap the perimeter of their immediate temporary territory, often leaving these deathtraps behind. A favourite is a two-liter soda bottle, tilted on its side and filled one-third with concentrated sulphuric acid, mixed

with two cups of gasoline. Hanging inside, from the screw-on cap, is a dry, empty teabag filled with potassium chlorate. As soon as the bottle is tipped over, it becomes an instant 'super molotov cocktail', erupting into a large and instantaneous fireball.

"In the world of organised crime, it is virtually forbidden to act violently against a policeman. The world of the outlaw biker contains no such sanction. Though policemen are normally accorded respect to 'keep the heat from coming down', a hardcore outlaw will kill you as soon as look at you if you catch him with contraband or a warrant outstanding. The officer who kills a Mafia enforcer in the line of duty is virtually immune from retribution, but not so the policeman who justifiably slays an outlaw biker: often his brother outlaws will take out a contract on the policeman's life.

"Most of the large outlaw gangs have a small contingent of killers for hire. Hell's Angels call theirs 'The Filthy Few', characterised by a patch they wear proudly, depicting a skull and crossbones with Nazi-like thunderbolts, and other gangs have used this terminology ...

"Remember, when you confront one, that the one-percenter lives in a totally different world than yours, and by totally different standards: an outlaw world where violation of society's standards is the norm. There is no compunction for your life, or even his own; he only cares for 'the club'.

"Parkhurst offers these final words of advice to officers who may have to deal with outlaw bikers:

"- When stopping a run, order all bikers to stay on their motorcycles. X number of those bikes will be stolen, and once

they've dismounted, the riders will mount the back of another motorcycle and get away, leaving the stolen bike abandoned with no one for you to pin it on.

"-Watch their women: they often carry guns for their men, and would rather die than let their man go to jail.

"- Be prepared for false I.P.'s when stopping a suspected one-percenter. Be courteous and respectful (sic), but also be firm; though they resent being hassled, the one thing they despise more is a perceived weakness.

"If you find a one-percenter gang taking up residence in your patrol area, it's definitely a matter of department-wide concern, and one that demands special training. The Federal Law Enforcement Training Centre states that they have no handout material to add to this exclusive P.P.N. report. However, the California Specialised Training Institute in San Luis Obispo does offer a similar bloc of training in their Officer Survival course ...

"Mr Ayooob wishes to thank the staff of F.L.F.T.C. for their outstanding assistance and hospitality during the on-premises preparation of this article."119

Britain too has its tradition of motorcycle club runs, a tradition which goes back in time almost as far as the appearance of the motorcycle itself. In the early days, when the technological development of the internal combustion engine was still in its infancy, the bikes were so unreliable, and garages so few and far between, that aficionados quickly realised the benefits to be gained from travelling in company when venturing very far from home. To combine with others to improve one's

chances of actually getting to enjoy the pleasures offered by motorcycle riding made good sound common sense and, at a time when, as now, the entire 'civilised' world appeared to regard motorcyclists as deranged lunatics, it made a satisfying change to spend leisure time in the company of fellow lunatics bitten by the bike bug. Such group activities provided a social dimension to what had hitherto been rather a solitary pursuit, bringing together riders from a wide variety of backgrounds, and formalising their group relationships. It was these early clubs which formed the nucleus of the post World War One flowering of motorcycling into a thriving social activity capable of sustaining itself in a less than sympathetic environment.

Between the wars, during the so called 'golden age' of British motorcycling, club activity reached an all time high. Clubs catered for both the social and sporting rider, organising a vast range of two-wheeled activities for their members, co-operating and competing with one another both on and off the race track. So much so that club membership became the main focus of life for countless thousands of young enthusiasts, who found in them a comradeship unobtainable elsewhere in the daily grind of work and home. Local clubs, national clubs, one-make clubs, touring clubs, racing clubs, civil service clubs, armed forces clubs, factory employees' clubs, women's clubs, even political and trades union clubs, all had a part to play in bringing motorcycling to the attention of the public at large, a public who it must be said held most illiberal views about this sudden encroachment of noisy groups of motorcyclists on their local preserves of tranquillity.

As long ago as 1909, the popular magazine Harpers Weekly recorded the 'rise of the motorcycle' with trepidation. It told

its concerned readership that:

"They ride in city or open country with their mufflers cut out, or in numerous cases absolutely devoid of muffling attachment. In some instances it was the rider's desire for noise, or to bring attention to the fact that he owned a motorcycle; in other instances it was the owner's desire for more power; but whichever the case, this offence in principle and in conjunction with that of unsuitable attire has done more to retard the advancement of motorcycling in general than all other arguments combined." 120

Local and national newspapers recounted myriad instances of unwelcome groups of motorcyclists shattering the peace and quiet of rural communities, causing farm animals to scatter and distressing elderly gentlefolk by their sight and sound. And the motorcycling press of the day, notably *The Motor Cycle*, a somewhat ponderous journal founded in 1903 to further the interests of the 'gentleman rider', also voiced its disapproval of the phenomenon, loudly condemning the ruination of 'their sport' at the hands of uncouth city 'oiks'.

Of course, it had all been seen before, some two decades previously, when the working class first asserted its right to venture en masse beyond the confines of its industrial barracks, and out into the world of the bourgeois aboard that other newly proletarianised form of transport, the bicycle. According to Geoffrey Pearson, such mobility both alarmed and outraged the authorities.

"Undoubtedly the most extraordinary aspect of (the) grumbling against the tendency of the working class to assert its noisome presence in places where it clearly had no right to

go, was to be found in the magnified **excitements** which surrounded the bicycle craze of the 1890s. Cycling was the centre of a number of social panics. It was feared that the push-bike was a health hazard, for example causing 'bicycle face', 'bicycle hand' and bicycle foot', as well as the dreaded kyphosis bicylistratum, or 'cyclist hump', which resulted if the handlebars were set too low. Evidence placed before the Physical Deterioration Committee even suggested that cycling was a threat to the nation's manliness, inducing varicocele of the testicles 'from the pressure of the saddle'." 121

Of more relevance to us however are the "allegations against the bicycling 'scorchers' who went too fast or ..., went too far and barged into middle class leisure haunts." 122

Pearson goes on to tell us of the "editorial fumings in The Times (15 August 1898) about the 'Fast-End or suburban "scorcher", dashing along quiet country roads and through peaceful villages with loud shouts and sulphurous language, and reckless of life and limb', and The Lancet (6 August 1898) saw fit to have a medical entry on 'The Fool on the Cycle'. Accounts of youth whizzing about madly on their bikes, causing pandemonium among the traffic, frightening horses, and knocking over pedestrians were as commonplace as the headlines which repeatedly sensationalised 'The Cyclist Terror', 'The Risks of the Cycle', 'The Perils of the Wheel', 'Moloch of the Wheel', 'The Dangers of City Cycling' and 'cyclomania'.

"There were many complaints by cyclists of harassment by the police and, in the midst of a social panic such as this, woe betide anyone who fell foul of the law while in charge of a bike ...

"The bicycle (says Pearson) was a powerful symbol of social change in this era, summing up the fears so easily brewing around popular freedoms and popular amusements, and it seemed to touch a brittle nerve of the process of democratisation. The Times (15 August 1898) had given the broadest indication of the shock-waves produced by the push-bike when it delivered its editorial judgement on 'The Bicycle as a Social Force', which bristled with otherwise unaccountable fears and allusions to deeper moving forces within society. The bicycle was accused of enlarging the scope for theft, and we were encouraged to linger over some of the more squalid details of profiteering and corruption which had accompanied the boom in the cycling industry ... (Whilst) the Daily Mail launched an angry editorial broadside ... (saying that) 'Steps should be taken to put these people down'." 123

If the cyclists of the Victorian era went too far and too fast into the leisure preserves of the middle classes, incurring the wrath of the police, the courts and the popular press, then their Twentieth Century motorised counterparts went even farther faster, and made a great deal of noise in doing it. The magistrates had their work cut out issuing summonses and imposing fines, and the village bobby lurking behind a tree waiting to jump out and apprehend a speeding motorcyclist became a standing joke. Many motorcycle clubs took to organising 'timed trials', events held on the public roads, usually at night, in which riders would compete against each other and the clock to pass through a series of timed checkpoints to arrive eventually at an unknown destination. These events, not surprisingly, led to vociferous complaints from the rural community kept awake by the sound of unsilenced exhausts, and landowners, whose unfenced property was often used as a handy shortcut by overeager competitors.

Such exhibitions of derring-do did not go unheeded for very long before they attracted the attention of the constabulary, whose long arm was quick to reach out and have them banned by an Act of Parliament expressly forbidding the use of the public highway for the purposes of motorised sporting events. The majority of motorcycle clubs were however neither surprised nor particularly perturbed by the ban, and turned instead to the leasing or buying of tracts of agricultural land (at that time planning permission was not necessary to determine 'change of use'), upon which to hold their own particular chosen variety of off-road competition. Thus, motorcycle sport in the form of scrambling, sprinting, speedway or grass track racing, began to flourish on rudimentary tracks throughout the British Isles. At the same time, however, other less organised, less scrupulous or, more usually, less well-heeled motorcycle clubs continued to organise illicit events on the open road. Initially, these continued in the familiar sporting tradition mapped out before the ban, but with the competitors dropping their identification numbers in order to minimise the risk of detection. But, devoid of the visible trappings of racing, the timed trials gradually took on more of a social rather than a sporting character. Riders ceased to bother with the *raison d'être* for these long distance runs, but merely agreed to a common destination at their weekly club meeting and duly assembled at the appointed hour for a mass outing to a coastal resort or some other place of recreation.

Strangely enough, it was the efforts put into the organisation of off-road sporting activities by their erstwhile colleagues that provided the most popular venues for these social runs. As World War II loomed on the horizon, the international motorcycle sporting scene assumed an exceedingly healthy state, with thousands

of enthusiasts flocking to the trackside on every available weekend. Motorcycle manufacturers, recognising a potential boom in sales, competed keenly with one another to provide ever more sophisticated production racing machines to an eager market, and clubs who found themselves lucky enough to own respectable grass or shale surfaced circuits ploughed money into turning them into purpose-built venues, complete with proper tarmac tracks and decent spectator facilities.

Riders would spend their free Saturday afternoons washing, polishing, and tuning their machines for the following day's run to one of the major race tracks - Brands Hatch, Silverstone, Thruxton, Oliver's Mount, Goodwood or Castle Donnington - and setting off in the early Sunday dawn, would make their way to the local transport cafe where they would meet up with the rest of the club contingent for a quick cup of coffee and a chat before setting off, their girlfriends clinging perilously to pillion seats not designed with passenger comfort in mind. Having reached their destination, they would mix and socialise with other clubs from different areas, engaging in good natured banter about rivalry more imagined than real. If, for some reason, members of a well known club failed to arrive at a race meeting, even if it took place at the other end of the country, then their lives would be made a misery by their rivals at the next meeting. The club concerned would have suffered a severe loss of face and would in consequence try even harder to cover all the meetings in the racing season's calendar. Thus, the weekly run came to assume a position of central importance in the social life of the club.

The outbreak of World War II, however, radically changed all this. Race tracks became just one of the many casualties of the war effort. Events were cancelled pending the cessation of

hostilities, and circuits closed down and recultivated for agricultural use. The young men who had once thronged the track-side to cheer on the sporting representatives of rival nations now rivalled each other on the battlefield. When the war came to an end in 1945, the British motorcycle scene was in a shambles. Few of the pre-war circuits could afford to reopen their turnstiles, and those that did were forced to ask entry prices way beyond the reach of the average working class enthusiast. Manufacturers too, having sacrificed their civilian product range in the race to gear up for intensive military vehicle production, were slow to respond to the demands of the post-war market. Research had long since ceased and talented design teams had been broken up to utilise their skills in more pressing areas of technology. And, in any case, the British factories once thriving international competitors, the German and the Italian Motorcycle industries, were well out of the game, eliminating the need to maintain expensive racing teams to stimulate foreign sales.

Those motorcyclists who did return from their unplanned stint in the armed forces reformed their clubs, but, of necessity, began to place a far greater emphasis on the social rather than the sporting side of things. They organised themselves around cafes and coffee bars, and held infrequent runs to the country, restricting their sporting involvement to supporting their local speedway team. In 1959, Father Bill Shergold, an East London vicar and confirmed motorcycle enthusiast, decided to do something to drag club life out of the doldrums. With the help of people all over England, he formed a club wholly dedicated to the social side of biking and, primarily, the coordination of mass runs. The '59 Club', as it became known, provided all sorts of facilities for its members and championed their cause in the face of a barrage of criticism from those who simply

dismissed them as suicidal juvenile delinquents. Bill Shergold was however far from being a typical evangelical minister intent on doing good works in order to save souls and gain converts. He had a sympathetic yet realistic attitude towards his leather-jacketted 'flock' and genuinely desired to propagate their interests.

Soon, the 59 Club, boasted a membership of several thousand subdivided into regional groups based in Britain's major towns. Their club runs set the standard for a host of smaller cafe-based clubs, many of whom became affiliated to the 59. Colin Pryce-Jones, a Triumph rider and lead guitarist and vocalist with the sixties-style rock'n'roll revival band The Rapiers, recalls his own involvement. For him:

"The appeal of the sixties was the music, the sound of massed bikes, the look - short hair and winklepickers - and the way the women dressed. There was an attitude of togetherness then, and that's what's missing today ...

"I led a dual sort of life. The Triumph Owners' Club didn't like anything outrageous - no studs on your jacket or bike names written across your back. I used a standard machine then to go touring and camping with them, and really enjoyed that side of motorcycling.

"But I also liked to do a bit of tearing about and I built cafe racers for that. Some were mild jobs with just clip-ons and rear-sets, but on others I went all the way and fitted swept-back reverse-cone meggas - painted red inside! - a five-gallon glass fibre tank and a racing seat. If you chose the dual racing seat it was only a few inches longer, and you both had to cram into a ridiculous space. Those bikes were incredibly

uncomfortable.

"The Ace and the Busy Bee cafes in North London were my usual haunts. At the Ace on the North Circular Road I used to race to a record on the juke box, Sheila by Tommy Roe, because that was my wife's name. We used to blast down Hanger Lane a mile away, and try to get back before the record finished.

"If someone came in and started mouthing incredible claims about his bike, we'd say, 'Put a record on and let's see if you can really do it.' That always sorted out the arguments ...

"I used to meet up with guys who didn't fit in with the uptight traditional club scene either, so we formed our own - the Ton Club - which used to meet in West Kingsdown near Brands Hatch. A member of the club had to follow you at 100m.p.h. before you could join. Doing a ton in those days was quite an achievement because the bikes were often not as fast as manufacturers and road tests claimed.

"There were a lot of accidents. You could go into the cafe on Friday night - club night - and find out that someone who had been there on the Thursday had been killed ... But it didn't seem to put anyone off ...

"Our bank holiday runs had to be seen to be believed. There would be lots of different clubs meet up at the Ace and we'd toss a coin to decide where to go. Usually it was Margate or Hastings, sometimes Brighton, and we'd all set off together in one big group - dozens of us, as fast as we could go.

"When we got there, we didn't do anything very much, just wandered around and looked at the girls on the beach, ate ice-creams and went on the pier. Although from expressions on the

faces of the holidaymakers, we might just as well have gone there to burn the bloody place down ... "124

Apart from these weekend forays to the coast, causing consternation to maiden aunts on the Brighton Prom, the British rockers' major run of the year was, and still is, focussed on that traditional mecca for motorcycling enthusiasts of all ages, the Isle of Man. The Manx authorities displayed an extraordinary degree of tolerance towards what their mainland colleagues regarded as a public nuisance and openly encouraged them to visit the Island. This attitude probably owed more to the fact that their high-spirited visitors only stayed for one week a year and were inclined to spend freely in the process. But, whatever the reason behind this wholly exceptional display of hospitality, the rockers were not slow to take advantage of it and flocked there in their thousands. In common with similar overtly motorcycle orientated venues in the United States, such as Daytona or Sturgis a considerable proportion of the visiting riders had little or no interest in the racing itself, but simply wanted to experience the atmosphere of T.T. week, chatting, drinking and generally enjoying the many bike-related social events laid on for their entertainment. Clubs would organise weeks in advance for the annual T.T. run, and would arrange to rendezvous with other clubs along the route. It was the links forged between clubs during this period, both on and off the Island, that formed the basis of the motorcycle club network, outlaw and otherwise, which was to blossom a decade later.

The moral panic engendered by the rockers' coastal runs during the mid-sixties is well documented elsewhere. The series of noisy, though largely bloodless, clashes with the oppositional two-wheeled fraternity, the mods, received widespread publicity

all over the world. Because of the trouble, and the accelerating trend amongst young men towards car rather than motorcycle ownership, large-scale runs to popular resorts soon lost their appeal. Many clubs turned instead to organising restricted on-site rallies in order to minimise the risk of violence. There was no run as such, instead riders who had pre-booked would make their own way, singly or in small groups, to a prearranged destination where they could conduct their activities in private, out of sight of both the gentlemen of the press and the sociologists, who had hitherto insisted on scrutinising their behaviour. As one of the participants put it:

"The press really played it up. There was hardly any bother at all in Clacton, but there was no news. They had to put something in the papers, so they put these 'Scooter Riot Frenzy' stories in, and made out it was a big mod/rocker thing. After that, every bank holiday, they were waiting for it to happen again so the scene was set, and the kids would oblige.

"The reporters then were all old boys, who just sat in pubs. They'd just walk in and do an interview and you'd just tell them anything they wanted to hear ..."¹²⁵

In subcultural parlance, these rally clubs became known as M.C.C. (Motor Cycle Club) clubs, as distinct from an entirely new form of club which was beginning to arrive from America about this time, the M.C. (Motorcycle Club) or outlaw club. This distinction is not merely a question of semantics, but acted as a fundamental line of division between the two separate camps. A distinction which is still very much in evidence today.

The outlaw clubs, which came into vogue at the end of the decade, continued to uphold the tradition of the mass run,

inherited from both the British rockers and the American Angels, and retained it as the central plank of club activity. For many of them, impoverished and disorganised as they were, the bank holiday runs were the highlight of the season, and the major impetus to keep on going.

These early British outlaw clubs parodied the dress and behaviour of their subcultural precursors on the other side of the Atlantic ocean in the most naive and grotesque of ways. Never having been accorded the opportunity to witness the 'real thing' at first hand, they relied instead for guidance upon a combination of half-truths gleaned from highly coloured newspaper reports and home-grown pulp fiction published in abundance by the very inaptly named New English Library who, ever eager to exploit the youth market, produced a range of titles purporting to portray the guerilla lifestyle of 'real' Hells Angels. This crude imagery comprised a potent combination of drugs, sex, violence and urban breakdown, in which the Angels were hailed as a tribe of freewheeling anti-heroes standing firm against an ever encroaching authoritarian state which was determined to do them down. These fictional outlaws revelled in their own filth and depravity, and gave rise to the myth that any 'Angel' worth his salt had to face the world looking like a cross between a professional dosser and a garage mechanic. Not unnaturally, such a decayed appearance, together with the accompanying odour, did little to endear them to the average man and woman in the street when, even during the days of the so-called 'permissive society', cleanliness was still generally considered adjacent to godliness.

Unaware too that the American outlaw subculture comprised a wide variety of different clubs with different names, the U.K. motorcycle rebels, in common with the U.K. press, used the generic

term Hells Angels to describe anybody who rode a chopper and deliberately cultivated an odious appearance. With only a few notable exceptions, virtually every one of these incipient outlaw clubs thought of themselves as the only authentic Angels in Britain. They had their own particular version of the death's head patch made up and battled with their fellow imposters to prove their worthiness to wear the regalia. This rivalry led to conflict amongst the clubs. Colours were stripped from lone riders and fights, or stompings, would break out whenever the warring chapters inadvertently bumped into one another. As each club tended to stick to its own territory for much of the time, when major conflict did arise, it more often than not occurred on a run, in full view of the public, which still further reduced the bikers' acceptability. Few people, particularly the British on holiday, welcomed the sight and sound of outlaw bikers riding en masse into town, still less if their well publicised potential for violence looked likely to be put into practice. Thompson described the spectacle of these early runs as resembling, "a human zoo on wheels. An outlaw whose normal day-to-day appearance is enough to disrupt traffic will appear on a run with his beard dyed green or bright red, his eyes hidden behind orange goggles, and a brass ring in his nose. Others wear capes and Apache headbands, or oversize sunglasses and peaked Prussian helmets. Farrings, Wehrmacht headgear and German Iron Crosses are virtually part of the uniform - like the grease-caked Levis, the sleeveless vests and all those fine tattoos: 'Mother', 'Tolly', 'Hitler', 'Jack the Ripper', swastikas, daggers, skulls, 'LSI', 'Love', 'Hate' and the inevitable Hells Angels insignia."¹²⁶

In 1973, a camera crew from Southern Television filmed the Amalgamation chapters' Easter run as part of a documentary on Hells Angels which was subsequently banned by the Independent

Broadcasting Authority on the grounds that it was far too shocking for public viewing. In the course of the programme, they recorded an interview with a senior police officer from the Avon and Somerset Constabulary, in the wake of a series of 'incidents' in which the entire contents of the Forest of Dean wishing well was appropriated, a public house wrecked and barrels of beer carted off, and the toll payment on the Severn Bridge deliberately ignored.

"We did of course know that the Hells Angels were in the vicinity over the weekend, and they were seen on internal television at our ... motorway police station coming over the Wye Bridge ... And it was felt that there might be trouble, that they might try to pass through without paying their dues on the bridge. As a result, the man alerted the nearest police car and sent it to the bridge. But unfortunately it arrived there after they had gone through and gone through without paying. But he found out that they'd gone up to the Top Rank cafe at Aust and consequently followed them up there ...

"And each individual before he was searched was asked if he minded being searched. And without exception, they all agreed to being searched ...

"They don't even carry in the main driving documents, insurance documents, or anything, because they want to remain unidentified. And if you go on tracing them it really does take months and months and months at a time to trace them. But I think we've got to keep on doing it ...

"There were several incidents involving their driving on the motorway which have been reported. And there will be action taken about that. And other enquiries are going on concerning the documentation of the vehicles and of the individual drivers.

Whether or not that will be successful remains to be seen. These enquiries take a very long time I'm afraid.

"But with regard to the non-payment of the toll on the toll bridge, when you get all this number going through the toll bridge at the same time, the collectors were rather taken aback and I'm afraid they didn't even get a single (registration) number of the individuals concerned. So there will be no action taken with regard to that ...

"On these runs that they do, it is more discrete to keep them on the move, keep them away from the public, not let them get involved with the public and intimidate the public, and therefore they do get away with rather more than one would expect.

"Some fifty per cent of all the total number of Hells Angels are in fact in prison. They've only been put there by the police. So you can't say that the police are frightened of them ...

"It's very alarming for instance that at certain times they are riding these machines when under the influence of drugs ... And I think that police action will undoubtedly be taken ... It will probably be some time before it's taken in the form of mass action, for the simple reason that it is always necessary ... to have some offence committed for which you have a right of arrest ... You can't demand that they come with you to the police station, so you're in a weak position. But as soon as ... we are in the position where we've got the strength and the right of arrest ..., then I'm quite sure that is when we step in and do something about it ..." 127

In spite of the fact that the Angels' account of their 'arrest' for non-payment of bridge tolls didn't exactly tally with the police version of events - they contended that, far

from acceding willingly to police requests for cooperation, they were handcuffed and 'dragged like fucking animals' from their bikes and forcibly searched, having been first 'run off the road' by patrol cars - they knew only too well that if they did not heed the warning, then they would sooner or later find themselves in deep trouble. The days of public carousing and petty theft were numbered and, if they wanted to continue with their runs, then they would have to minimise the risks involved.

Fortunately for the outlaws, there was an obvious and wholly acceptable solution to the problem close at hand, and that was the very timely advent of the open-air rock festival. Their Stateside bretheren, already well acquainted with the manifold attractions that such events had to offer, had found them a safe haven from the unwelcome attentions of the police, and they quickly followed suit. In Britain too, the cult movie Easy Rider had had a profound effect on the development of the biker subculture, and had brought about an empathetic relationship between bikers and the much larger hippie subculture. Therefore, it was scarcely surprising that the free festival should become an extremely popular venue for the traditional bank holiday run.

Parasitic upon the host subculture though the visiting Angels undoubtedly were, they nevertheless performed a useful function by acting as an unpaid security force, discouraging the police and other anti-hippie elements from entering the site. As long as the more belligerent bikers stood guard on the gate, the flower children could be as peaceful and loving as they liked without having to worry about violent incursions from the outside world. With the 'blue meanies' held at bay, the trip could go on undisturbed, for the weekend anyway. Even the horrific death of a festival goer at Altamount did little to change this cosy relationship between bikers and hippies, which continued until

the mid-seventies when the free festivals disappeared under a mountain of legislation.

This period was however not without its ups and downs. As Buttons summed it up in his biography:

"The summer rock concert ... helped to display what we were capable of doing for the general scene ... We had a good time. The only place we ever went on a run to with trouble planned was the Isle of Wight. (But) the festivals are not a place to recruit people. It's a place to annihilate them. You see all these kids running around with their Hells Angels tee-shirts on and it infuriates you. They have to be taught a lesson ..." ¹²⁸

At the Isle of Wight festival, the England Angels made a bloody assault on their rivals, the Amalgamation chapters, who had also chosen the event for their August bank holiday run. Patches were pulled and heads broken on both sides, before both groups of bikers turned their attention to a more pressing problem, the removal of the fences excluding them from the site. Their differences temporarily forgotten, the warring clubs got together with the White Panthers and a contingent of French Anarchists to open up the festival. As the underground press (International Times, Friends and Oz) saw it:

"The Angels were the only organised revolutionary force in the area. Not one to normally identify with the problems of others, as Buttons said. 'We take care of ourselves first, then we'll start talking about other people,' the problem of 10,000 friends in the cold was more than ever he could deny.

"The concentration camp security of the festival was designed to exclude the Angels from their traditional role as 'security'. Police in Portsmouth stopped some 40 youths, dressed in Angel-like

gear, and removed weapons, chains, forcing them to park their bikes on the mainland. However, Buttons and a few of his club members arrived by bus and took up position on the flat beside the Jesus Tent, under their Swastika flag.

"At 7pm on Saturday, 60 police surrounded the Angels' camp, and in a one-to-one confrontation ordered them to play it cool. One of the catering staff had complained that an Angel went into the women's loos and the police asked them to remove their swastika. Angels' leader Buttons would only agree if the police also requested everyone else at the festival to remove their flags. The police retracted their demand and left the Angels alone for the rest of the festival ...

"Few people seemed prepared to do anything about the exploitation of the festival merchants. Aware of the problems since he arrived on Friday afternoon, by Saturday morning when there was obviously no chance of any food coming through and no concessions being made, Buttons decides on direct action ...

"On Saturday evening, at a midnight meeting held between himself, the White Panthers and some Young Liberals, it is decided although an attack on the festival fences would only be a symbolic gesture, it should be carried out anyway ...

"At ten on Sunday morning, Buttons and his fellow members of the London Hells Angels lead an attack on a 50 yard section of the south perimeter. In an out and out hand to hand battle with the security guards, Buttons is injured. An iron bar across his forehead results in a six inch gash. However, the break in the fence is made ...

"Extra guards, armed with iron bars and dogs are moved up to the fence. With them come two water-tankers, presumably to be

used as water-cannons. Under cover of reinforcements, maintenance crews began to repair the breaks in the fence ...

"The Chief Superintendent of the Hampshire Constabulary grows worried about future outbreaks of violence from the Angels' camp. In a closed meeting, Buttons negotiates forcefully and the armed security men, most of whom are entirely unsuited for the job, are replaced by regular policemen ...

"The Angels prove themselves to be the power of the Festival Movement. Hard knocks are an accepted fact to their way of life which digs deeper than merely wearing the patch and riding their bikes ..."129

Despite this idealised account of the Angels' selfless action, Buttons himself was less than complimentary about the hippies, who he regarded as being 'sheeplike wallies'. As he puts it:

"I just couldn't believe what I was viewing! I thought (it was) crazy! ... I asked people on the hill overlooking the festival if they wanted to get in. They said yes, they'd certainly like to get into the concert free, but they were content to remain half a mile away, cold and hungry, on their hill ...

"I was feeling kinda proud and really into caring for everyone. Our own family and the thousands around us. I felt responsible because we seemed to be the only organised group capable of doing anything constructive ... (But) the gist of the talk from the people was that we had sold them out ...

"The guards limped off, carrying their wounded comrades to safety. The French moved in, followed by about fifty freaks who had merely stood by and watched the action. The whole panorama of the events was completely frozen and stupefied when those on

the inside who had paid, rushed to keep the fences up ...

"Now that blew it! Sold them out! For what? and to whom? In that instant I knew everything we had done was for our family, our club. The hip groovy mass could goddam well take care of themselves ...

"I was pissed off with hippies and thought nothing of forcibly knocking a few heads and moving a few bodies so that we, our family, could get to the front of the stage while Jimi Hendrix was on.

"You know I really felt let down, as if I'd been stabbed in the back ... Now that was the end! I wasn't standing for anyone but my own club! What the other lot did was their own business ..., they could go to hell. It had nothing to do with me..." 130

As the seventies drew on and the hippie bubble burst, more and more trouble occurred at festivals, in which the bikers played an increasingly prominent role. An Amalgamation run to the Phun City festival at Wheeley in Essex in the August of 1971, exploded into violence as the Angels fought a pitched battle with private security operatives hired by the organisers, the underground newspaper International Times, to 'police' the event. Eighty-eight outlaws were arrested and six subsequently received terms of imprisonment for their part in the affray.

Festivals though continued to be a favourite target for club runs, but their popularity was on the wane as the bikers became more disillusioned and more parasitic towards their hippie hosts. Instead of mixing freely with one another, the two groups adopted a stance of mutual hostility and distrust. Fights would break out, heads would get broken, and tents would get robbed. It was

clear that the relationship had become stretched beyond the bounds of viability and no longer benefitted either the bikers or the hippies, who withdrew their formerly freely given goods and services to their erstwhile protectors. Where the run destination was a festival, like Windsor, the bikers' camp would occupy a separate area on the periphery of the main site, access to which was restricted to club members only.

As the festivals folded the bikers returned to their old patterns of behaviour, holding nomadic runs to nowhere in particular, and confronting their old enemy, the police, in surroundings not of their own choosing. Only the annual summer solstice festival at Stonehenge has survived as a popular venue, and the future of that too is in doubt.

Today, virtually all British outlaw clubs, the Hells Angels included, continue to hold at least two major runs a year, usually on pre-arranged sites leased from a sympathetic 'friend of the club', or bought and paid for out of club funds. They keep themselves to themselves, arrive and depart with the minimum of fuss, take with them their own supply of food, drink and musical entertainment and discourage uninvolved observers. They have learnt that contact with the surrounding community can spell trouble, and indeed deliberately go out of their way to avoid it. True, the massed packs of bikers continue to ride fast and recklessly en route to the site, causing consternation and chaos amongst other road users, but the police seldom interfere, content to make sure that the run moves off their patch as swiftly as possible and on towards its destination. They are fully aware that many of the participants are unlicensed, uninsured, or both, but prefer to overlook that relatively minor problem in favour of the maintenance of public order which might well be severely

jeopardised if they chose to stop and book people for assorted road traffic offences. Such a compromise works well and the only contact that members of the general public have with the bikers is a fleeting glimpse as they roar by.

In the 1980s the average club run has evolved into a very much more sedate affair. Some members even take their wives and families along with them, treating the occasion as their annual holiday. Ten years ago, no self-respecting Angel would have dreamt of setting off on a run carrying waterproof riding gear or a sleeping bag, let alone a tent. And old ladies (members' wives) were expressly forbidden from going along. Crashing (sleeping) on a run was taboo, and woe betide anybody caught in the act. Those who were, were woken up by being urinated over or being set on fire, and prospects would be put through a rigorous, and often painful, series of 'tests' designed to prove their eligibility for full membership. They had to show that they could stand up for themselves in a fight and maintain the honour of the club against rival chapters. These physical ordeals took several forms, including standing in the middle of bonfires, being chained to the backs of moving bikes and made to run, and fighting piggy-back style with pick-axe handles whilst waist-deep in muddy water.

Nowadays though, prospects are merely required to do the chores around the campsite, dispensing beer and food and doing their turn on guard duty. And full-patch members shelter from the vagaries of the British weather in hired marquees, caravans and campers. Nonetheless, the run remains what it was from the outset, the premier form of collective social activity for the outlaw motorcycle club, promoting and reaffirming inter-chapter bonds of solidarity and brotherhood.

I asked the Kent Angels what made the runs special for them:

Snake: "I think the feeling when you're actually on a run is almost indescribable. It's ... I mean, maybe if you're at the tail end you can look down the road and you can maybe see two hundred, two hundred and fifty people in front of you, just kind of zooming along the road up and down the hills, and the wind on your face, and there's guys flash past with their old ladies on the back ... And it's just such a nice feeling of freedom and togetherness. It ... It's unreal ... I mean, I like riding my bike off on my own in the sun, on the back roads through the mountains and things, but glued together in a group like that, it's an amazing feeling."

Do you get a lot of opposition from the police or the public when you go off on club runs?

Snake: "Yes, some. But not as much as we used to a few years back, then we often left people behind in police stations when we came away (laughter). Today we try our best to keep away from other people, because we want to prevent any hassles, and because we want to be with just ourselves, not anybody else. We don't need a lot of shit like that. I mean, you know, we could camp out in the middle of a town somewhere and immediately wind everybody up, only it would ruin the point of the whole exercise wouldn't it? It just wouldn't make any sense at all. Half of us would get nicked as soon as we tried to get a drink, and that would be it for the weekend, you know. There's no fun in that, except for the police. No, our runs are our own affairs, they're not a public exhibition, they're not entertainment ..."

I asked a chap from the local police, down there by the gate, and he was well happy.

Fagin: "Oh yes, our policemen are wonderful ... (laughter)"

They just leave us alone to do our own thing, so long as we don't rub them up the wrong way, it's okay."

I see a lot of people drinking and using drugs. Aren't you worried that they'll get out of control? Most people imagine that you're all using them. Are you?

Gipsy: "I don't use too many drugs. None of our guys use too many drugs. If they did, they wouldn't be here now, they wouldn't be in the club, not at all. I mean, riding bikes and using drugs doesn't go together. Obviously, you know, you've gotta be aware of what's going on haven't you, otherwise you're not going to be around for very long. It's as simple as that. I mean like, we smoke dope, who doesn't? It's no big deal, everybody does it. Some of us drink a lot and some don't touch it at all, and some of us do speed when we want to keep awake, but that's about it. Nothing heavy, nothing addictive, nothing you stick in you or anything like that, I mean that's totally out of the question. We don't like smack, we've got no time for it, or the people who do use it, you know. And we don't like people who out it on the streets. We will make it a point to put them out of business if they do it in our area. We believe in community policing (laughter). Ropeheads are just that ... deadbeats, nothing, that's all. Useless to themselves and us. You can't trust them at all, they'd grass up their own grandmothers for an earner. We don't need that shit. We've got rules against smack and needles, and anything like that. We've got them, but we've never had to use them. Everyone knows it's bad news. We don't need rules to tell us that, that's obvious. We like having a good time, and sometimes we have a good time taking drugs, that's all ... The good times are so important, and you can't have a good time if you need a fix every five minutes to do it.

Gipsy: "What's your idea of a good time?"

Good time? ... A good time is when you look around you and
see your brothers having a good time ...

CHAPTER XV: THE BIKE

"They're our life. We pride ourselves on them. And we pride ourselves that they're always ridden on the road, whatever the weather. Not like the wallies who jump in their motors the minute it looks like rain. Plus, they're some of the best there is, we rebuild them every year. But they're not just show bikes, they're always on the road. They're not something created in a kinda, you know, sterile atmosphere, and brought out on a trailer two or three times a year. We ride them and we take a pride in them. That's what it's all about. One of our guys might be absolutely potless, you know, skint, but if he has to go without he will. You'll never see him without a decent set of wheels though ..."

Snake

The custom motorcycle is, not surprisingly, the single most important element in the world of the outlaw biker. Symbolically it roots him firmly within the boundaries of the much broader motorcycle subculture, providing an overarching and immediate identity with his less hardcore peers, whilst at the same time, because of its very extreme styling, exclusivity and charisma, elevating him far beyond the confines of the wider genre. It may well be that he owns and drives a much more mundane form of two -wheeled transport, or even a car, for everyday work or leisure, but the ownership of a custom built motorcycle which stands out from the crowd and makes a statement about its rider to the outside world, is absolutely vital for the maintenance of elite status within the motorcycle subculture. It has often been said of the outlaw biker by law enforcement agencies, particularly in the United States, that he'd far rather drive around in a Cadillac or a Lincoln Continental than use a bike.

But there is no such trend, and the bond between the outlaw biker and his bike remains as strong as ever. A large proportion of the life of the outlaw biker revolves inextricably around the ownership of a custom motorcycle, not only on a personal or club level, but also in terms of his broader social affiliations and activities. It represents a form of income for many, whether via the ownership of custom motorcycle shops or breakers yards, through trading parts with fellow bikers, or selling specialist skills such as welding, engine building, spraying, leatherworking, engraving etc., etc.

Fagin, the Hells Angels' president, owns his own custom bike shop. I asked him how that related to his membership of the club:

Fagin:

"Well, for a start, it means that there's no conflict between my personal life and the club. I can be around motorcycles all of the time. I don't have to dress up or anything, and go out to work for anybody else. I'm an engineer by trade, and I've got qualifications and all sorts of things, and I can use them doing the things I love."

Which is?

Fagin:

"Working on bikes."

But how does that relate to being a Hells Angel?

Fagin:

"Well, I see a lot more of the other guys in the club. They come around the shop buying bits and pieces for their bikes, and sometimes I'll build engines for them, or even complete bikes. I

specialise in custom bikes rather than straight repairs on any old thing. I mean, I don't mind doing the odd job or two to help out a friend or somebody local who asks me nicely, but by and large I leave the moped market and all that to pther people. I don't like having pimply youths with Hondas hanging around the place, it's bad for business (laughter). Harleys are my big thing. I've got a Harley trike myself. I built it myself. I lost a leg five years back in a bike smash and I can't get a licence to ride a solo now. The motor is stroked and bored to nearly 1700 c.c. and goes really well. It looks a peach and is good advertising for the shop. Sometimes I enter it in custom shows, I won a couple of cups here (Kent Custom Bike Show) last year. But mostly it's a road machine, every day transport for me.

"A lot of guys in the club have got chopped Harleys, and more and more are getting them. They're very expensive, but they're the best there is. I do a lot of Harley repairs for people from all over the country, and some times from Europe too, particularly from Holland where they're really into them. There aren't many guys over here who can do that sort of work, so I'm doing pretty well okay right now. I've been over to the States a couple of times, I've been to the Harley-Davidson factory in Milwaukee and had a guided tour. It was like I was royalty or something (laughter). I'm also lucky 'cause I get stuff sent over from the States from guys in the club who've got shops over there, which means I get really good deals sometimes. It helps me out a lot. It's not that we're particularly biased against Jap bikes, some of our guys ride them and really like them, Grill (Gorilla) has got a Honda Gold Wing and wouldn't part with it for the world, which is a bit funny seeing as he works here as a

Harley mechanic all week. Perhaps he knows something we don't. (laughter). Anyhow, whatever, he rides it and likes it, and that's up to him, but mainly it's Harleys. It goes with the image (more laughter).

"I run the shop and I've brought everything up here to the show to put on a stand, but I see it as a commercial point of view as more of a promotion bid than actual sales, 'cause people don't come on a weekend like this to buy spares and things. But for me it's good public relations, good promotion, and I get to know more of the customers at the same time. It works out quite well because of that."

Apart from Fagin and Gorilla, several other Hells Angels members earn a living by working with motorcycles: two have repair shops cum breakers yards, one is a full-time mechanic with a large Japanese bike dealer, two others are part-time mechanics working from home, one is a custom paint sprayer, another a leather worker, and one of the prospects a motorcycle despatch rider.

Most, if not all, outlaw bikers have a long history of involvement within the broader motorcycle subculture, and consequently an equally long history of motorcycle ownership, generating a deep commitment to bike riding and its attendant social infrastructure. In fact, they represent some of the most deeply committed of all two-wheel enthusiasts. Thus, upon 'graduation' into the high status and high profile world of the one-per center, they are more than anxious to continue to publicly demonstrate their ability to build and ride motorcycles to a degree which sets them both apart and above their former compatriots. They may have no visible means of support, but nonetheless the bikes they ride are very often amongst the most exclusive and expensive on the road. Whilst the outlaw biker's personal hygiene may not

be of the highest order, his sartorial tastes amounting virtually to a badge of destitution, his bike on the other hand will always be immaculately turned out, having had unlimited quantities of time, money and skill expended on it. It is quite common to see a biker whose appearance gives every impression that he's spent weeks sleeping rough, astride a spotless hand-crafted machine that would not seem out of place in an art gallery, and which goes every bit as well as it looks.

Snake:

"I've got a Harley-Davidson. It's a 1955 rigid frame with an eighty-six cubic inch engine, that's about 1460 c.c. At the moment I'm rebuilding it, but I hope to have it back on the road soon. I rebuild it every year, just because I like doing it, not because it necessarily needs rebuilding. It's the fifth Harley I've owned, and I love 'em. You know, okay, I mean compared with some sort of high-tech Jap bikes they're maybe rather primitive, but it's like people who choose to drive vintage cars in preference to some sort of modern Ford Sierras. There's just a kind of feeling that you can't replicate. It cost me three grand or so to buy, and that was in a right tatty state. The rebuild will probably cost nearly half as much as that again, by the time I've got all the bits I want from the States, but I guess it's like with everything else, you don't really tot it all up. It's the pleasure you get out of it not the cost, you know. You can't just go out and buy one like it in a shop. If you could it wouldn't be worth all the time and trouble."

The archetypical outlaw motorcycle is known throughout the subculture as a chopper, a term first coined on the West Coast of the United States in the early 1950s, when riders of big American made V-twin Harley-Davidsons and Indians, anxious to

remain competitive against imported upstart Limey bikes (lighter and more responsive British made Triumphs, B.S.A., Matchless, Norton, A.J.S. and others) set about paring all the excess weight off their machines, 'chopping' them down to the absolute bare minimum. Thus, in comparison with the bulky and ponderous motorcycles that rolled off the production lines in Milwaukee and Springfield, Massachusetts, to find favour amongst long distance touring type riders, the chopper was both light and fast, albeit over short distances. In common with its counterpart in the car world the hot rod, the chopper presented a radical departure from the traditional concept of what an American motorcycle should be. Unlike the European market, which had long been dominated by sporting motorcycles designed to appeal specifically to the road rider seeking to emulate the heroes of the race track without running the risks of actual competition riding, American motorcyclists opted instead for large capacity highway cruisers capable of carrying the rider and vast amounts of luggage over very long distances in the highest degree of comfort available, sporting motorcycles being restricted to the race track. After the war however a new generation of younger less touring orientated riders appeared on the scene. They found themselves in a position to afford the relatively high prices commanded by American machines which had hitherto been the province of older more affluent riders, but they wanted to have fun riding them, and having fun meant making them go faster. They had no desire to get their kicks vicariously at the race track, instead they wanted to experience the thrills of riding a bike to its limits themselves, out on the street. Accordingly, they began to experiment by modifying standard bikes to suit their purpose, creating a hybrid machine called a 'bob-job' because of its shortened, or 'bobbed' fenders, but very soon went further and

started to build complete machines from the ground up - choppers.

The chopper builder would commence by throwing away all the standard parts fitted by the factory and replace them with much lighter items begged, borrowed or stolen from smaller American and European models. Off came the large capacity fat-bob petrol tanks and the massive sprung buddy seat, off came the running boards and the deeply valanced fenders, off came the fat front wheel, off came the restrictive mufflers (silencers) and on went whatever replacement parts were available to the riders of the time. The resulting creation, with its rigid no-suspension frame positioned the rider very close to the ground, and he sat in the bike rather than on top of it, the combination presenting an entirely different image to the observer. Like the hot rod, it looked mean and aggressive, an image exploited to the full by the chopper rider.

There were no special custom parts available over the counter at that time and any chopper builder worth his salt had to employ a high degree of skill and ingenuity in order to complete his mount to his satisfaction. Because of the homemade nature of these bikes no two choppers were the same, each individual builder tailoring his machine to his own tastes and the depth of his pocket. It wasn't long before chopper builders began to compete amongst themselves to prove who could build the best looking bike. They also started to race each other, not in American Motorcycle Association sanctioned events, but on secluded back roads away from the sight of the police, and later, on dirt drag strips. Competition was keen and riders took great pains to extract every available ounce of horsepower from their engines. They changed carburettors and exhaust systems, polished and ported cylinder heads, and modified transmissions. As the bikes got quicker and

quicker, it became necessary to alter the steering geometry to cope with the extra power. Harleys and Indians, by far the most popular basis for choppers and manufactured with short, softly sprung and steeply angled forks which whilst coping admirably with the job they were designed to do, proved somewhat less than adequate when subjected to the stresses and strains imposed on them by a rider driving a highly tuned machine to its limits. They lacked ground clearance when cornering, and tended to weave alarmingly from side to side at high speeds. In an attempt to provide a solution to these rather hazardous tendencies, chopper builders raked their frames slightly to alter the basic steering geometry and improve straight line stability, a move which also necessitated a corresponding increase in the length of the forks to maintain adequate ground clearance. This combined operation kicked out the front end and lowered the bike even further, giving it a lean, almost menacing, appearance. Thus, by the late 1950s, choppers had developed a long way stylistically, their profile having already adopted the immediately recognisable classic form still popular today amongst outlaw bikers, and widely identified with them by the general Public. These were no nonsense, no frills bikes; gaudy, brash, loud, and nasty, they proclaimed their riders contempt for the factory produced 'garbage wagons' much beloved by 'respectable' American motorcyclists. The outlaws considered themselves to be a breed apart, and their machines set the seal on the image.

As builders grew progressively more experienced and more affluent they began to pay greater attention to the cosmetic styling of their bikes. Outlaw motorcycle clubs organised custom shows in which builders were able to compete with each other for much coveted prizes. Designs became more outrageous as the

competition became fiercer - forks grew longer and longer, handle-bars got taller, exhaust pipes towered up towards the sky, high backed 'banana' or 'king and queen' seats were topped off with backrests or 'sissy bars' as they became known, and brightly coloured paintwork and chromium plate completed the package. Footrests and controls were placed right at the front of the machine, the biker assuming a relaxed laid-back riding position, his hands trailing almost nonchalantly from the 'ape hanger' bars, his hair blowing free in the wind. Behind him, his chick or old lady rode pillion on the 'pea pad', feet placed on the passenger pegs way up high by the rider's seat, knees on a level with his shoulders, her back supported on the sissy bar, the pair of them together blending in to such a degree that to the casual observer it was difficult to discern precisely where the bike ended and the bikers began. This image was to be repeated over and over again in newspapers, in magazines, and in numerous cheaply produced 'B' movies, until the chopper became publicly synonymous and inseparable from the subculture from which it had been born.

By the advent of the sixties, show bikes had developed into a recognisable and clearly defined artform, the more well known builders, such as one time Hells Angels' member Ed 'Big Daddy' Roth and the uncrowned king of custom bikes Arlen Ness, achieving cult status amongst chopper riders. Small factories sprang up throughout the United States, manufacturing custom parts for chopper builders, and virtually every sizeable town boasted its very own chop shop offering a whole range of services - tuning, spraying, chroming, even the fabrication of complete hand-crafted one-off specials. For the first time, a biker possessing little or no mechanical knowledge was able to build himself a bike from off the shelf custom parts and assume the outlaw image.

Hollywood born Roth entered the customising field as soon as he'd learned how to drive and, together with biker artist Dave Mann, is generally credited as the founding father of the chopper. In common with many of the early bike builders, Roth started out by customising cars:

"Everybody in high school had a hot rod. You see, after the war there just weren't any cars available. So you were forced to build these hot rods, which were just a conglomeration of parts. My own first hot rod was a Model 'A' (Ford) that I put together to drive to school. It was a 1930 and that was in 1947. Then in '48 I got a '33 Ford and left it stock. Then in '49, the year I graduated, I got a '39 Chevy and frenched (removed) all the fenders. That was my first custom." 131

In 1956, whilst employed as a pinstriper and custom painter, Roth hit upon an idea which would revolutionise the concept of the custom vehicle. His idea was to build a fibre-glass bodied hot rod from the ground up, the first of its kind in America. Called the Outlaw, it caused a huge stir when it was finally completed and shown in 1958. Says Roth:

"I originally built the thing for these small car shows where they gave away trophies. I was real hot for trophies then. But soon the demand for the car increased, and it became sort of a payola deal whereby I'd agree to bring the car to the show in exchange for my T-shirt booth. Then it mushroomed into where I could demand show money as well as a booth. And then I couldn't keep up with the demand for the T-shirts and had to start silk-screening them in huge quantities." 132

Roth began to be recognised as a trend setter in the custom field and earned a lot of money peddling his wares, but he pract-

ically lived in an old hearse and still mixed with the street people, including the Hells Angels. He decided to get out of the T-shirt business and, on the strength of his success with the Outlaw, received sponsorship from a top model making firm who sold miniature reproductions of his car by the thousand, turning 'Big Daddy' into a household name. However, when the model company found out about his association with the Hells Angels, they released him from his contract, claiming that the motorcycle image was detrimental to their business.

Roth had no regrets. He immediately went into the publishing business, creating a magazine called Choppers and building a succession of motorcycle-based customs which through its pages set new styling trends for American bike builders. Choppers magazine encouraged the uninitiated to build their own custom bikes and offered a medium for the exchange of allied goods and services. Roth's own machines were widely exhibited throughout the United States and attracted an enthusiastic following. His show success firmly established the custom motorcycle as an artform on equal footing with its four-wheeled counterpart, the hot rod, and spawned a host of imitator builders keen to challenge Roth for the prizes. Eventually, Roth became 'just another chopper builder', relinquishing his control of Choppers magazine to others, and returning to the T-shirt business, but not before he had invented the now popular three-wheeled version of the chopper, the trike.

In this way, the outlaw motorcycle subculture extended far and wide beyond its established base in California, albeit in a much more diluted form. Show orientated choppers evolved into something virtually unrideable on the street, their ludicrously extended forks and spindly brakeless front wheels presenting a

positive safety hazard, even to riders with scant regard for their own personal well-being, but nevertheless the true outlaw biker's mount, although more often than not a personalised work of art, still maintained the fundamental necessities for hard fast road work. The gulf between the two stylistic extremes steadily widened throughout the 1960s, until today the very separate realms of show and street bikes seldom, if ever, encroach on each other's highly specialised territory. Nonetheless, there is still highly symbolic relationship between the two, both in the minds of outlaw bikers themselves and, perhaps more importantly, in the minds of the wider motorcycle subculture, for whom the show bikes represent the chopper genre in its purest and most public form. In the past few years, there has been a significant revolt within the subculture, manifesting itself in a distancing from bikes that are incapable of being ridden on the street, and a concomitant trend towards the setting up of large and highly successful road-ridden only custom bike shows. A good example of this trend is the British annual Kent Custom Bike Show, organised and run by the Hells Angels, which since its inauguration in 1979 has risen to become the biggest event of its kind in Europe, attracting hardcore outlaw bikers from all over the Continent. A host of similar shows have appeared in its wake, catering exclusively for the road rider and shunning the immobile artform. It is far too early yet to predict whether or not such a trend will gather momentum in the United States where pure custom shows are billion dollar business, but there is every indication that the chopper is gradually undergoing a process of reappropriation by the outlaw subculture.

The difference in stylistic extremes between show and go choppers was made very apparent as long ago as 1969 in the cult

movie Easy Rider, the film which more than any other led to a widespread popularisation of the chopper style and the outlaw biker subculture throughout the world to countries as far removed as Sweden, Australia, South Africa and England. The two stars, Peter Fonda and Fennis Hopper, were both mounted on Harley choppers, but the bikes themselves were deliberately drawn from opposite ends of the styling spectrum. Fonda's bike, in common with the character he plays, is flashy and outrageous, its Captain America paint job going completely over the top. It has no front brake, eighteen inches over stock extended forks and very high handlebars, and represents the state-of-the-art show bike of the period, an out and out styling exercise rather than a machine designed to get its rider from A to B. His partner Billy's chopper is on the other hand eminently representative of contemporary street ridden outlaw bikes - much more conventional in every way, shorter forks, larger capacity petrol tank, effective braking system, and sober paint job. It makes the statement to those in the know, that its owner is a hard-riding scooter (In America the term scooter is widely used within the outlaw biker subculture as an alternative description to chopper - not to be confused with the small Italian two strokes used by British mods in the early sixties) tramp, someone to be taken seriously, and not simply a trendy boulevard poser decked out to look the part. To the initiated, the dichotomy is obvious and meaningful, but to the uninitiated, the message is lost. Although nothing could be further from the truth, Fonda reigns supreme as the all time archetypical chopper rider. The media has got a lot to answer for.

As the sixties drew to a close, a new and highly significant sight began to appear on the streets, the 750 c.c. Honda

Four, the first large capacity Japanese motorcycle. Achieving an instant and massive appeal amongst motorcyclists as a whole, these sophisticated four cylinder machines were shunned by outlaw bikers as 'Jap crap'. No self-respecting outlaw worthy of the name would be seen dead on one despite the relatively low price, reliability and high performance it offered, preferring instead to stick to the big Harley V-twin or, to a lesser extent, a British engined bike. Slogans were rapidly conceived to show their derision of the new 'toy', many of which are still in widespread use, displayed on T-shirts, patches and tattoos in an enormous profusion at every biker gathering - 'HARLEY'S BEST - FUCK THE REST', 'GOD RIDES A HARLEY', 'I'D RATHER SEE MY SISTER IN A WHOREHOUSE THAN MY BROTHER ON A HONDA', 'REMEMBER PEARL HARBOUR - BUY AMERICAN', and so on. All expressed a universal distaste for 'rice burners' as Oriental motorcycles came to be called, and all found lasting favour amongst the outlaw fraternity. It wasn't, and isn't, so much a question of patriotism, it was a much more fundamental rejection from the subculture of motorcycles, however good, produced for mass public consumption. Japanese bikes didn't, and don't, 'fit' the outlaw style, and it is exceedingly unlikely that they ever will.

The appearance of Japanese bikes on the American market attracted countless thousands of previously non-motorcycling people to the world of two-wheeled travel. They were promoted as recreational and rapidly became a leisure vehicle for those who already used an automobile as a primary form of transport. The Japanese ad men for their part worked hard to promote this image of the motorcycle, coining phrases like - 'YOU MEET THE NICEST PEOPLE ON A HONDA' - in an attempt to disassociate their

clientele from the world of the outlaw biker and all that went with it. This rejection had an immediate and permanent effect upon the subjects of that well orchestrated campaign of rejection, it bonded them together tighter than ever before, defining and hardening the parameters of the outlaw subculture. Almost overnight the mighty Harley-Davidson became an engineering anachronism, the sole surviving American motorcycle manufacturer was fighting for its very existence against a relentless tide of Japanese imports that had it beaten hands down in terms of quality, speed, reliability, and most important of all, price. The H-D factory had hitherto always looked down upon the less socially acceptable exponents of its marque, the chopper riders, choosing instead to court the much diminished touring market, its traditional standby. Ironically, it was now reluctantly forced, in the interests of its own self-preservation, to recognise precisely where the majority of its products ended up. The marketing philosophy at its Milwaukee headquarters underwent a dramatic rethink and looked towards the chopper fraternity for its salvation. The company took its ageing low revving 1200 c.c. power plant and put it into a range of cosmetically redesigned bikes copying closely, albeit in a watered down form, the current trends in chopper design. Thus, the 'factory custom' motorcycle was born. The factory took the bastard offspring it had always vociferously condemned, sanitised and soberised it, and attempted to resell it to the very people who had been responsible for its creation in the first place. Names were stolen straight from the show circuit, names that had over the years come to be inextricably linked with the outlaw subculture - 'LOWRIDER', 'FAT BOB', 'WIDE GLIDE' - all terms which had evolved within and held particular meanings for those involved. This blatantly crude attempt on the part of the company to court sales amongst

those that they had previously openly despised was quickly followed by their competitors. Other manufacturers followed suit.

The ailing British motorcycle industry, already dead on its feet, rallied round and started to export tackily and expensively tarted up 'export models' to project the new image - all an abject failure, and a major contribution towards its total demise. Even the big four Japanese manufacturers - Honda, Suzuki, Yamaha and Kawasaki - jumped on the bandwagon in an attempt to further increase their already vast share of the highly lucrative U.S. market. But, notwithstanding the huge amounts of technical and financial resources at their disposal, Japanese designers signally failed to be able to reproduce the essence of chopper styling in a mass market machine, their products being greeted with derision by bikers for whom the word 'custom' meant a one-off creation tailored to meet the requirements of the individual, however unconventional or bizarre those requirements might be, not simply a mass produced product labelled 'custom', produced in look-alike millions and made available to anyone and everyone who chose to appropriate the outlaw image on a purely superficial basis.

This massive incursion into an area of the market which had hitherto been the virtually exclusive domain of the Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company further hardened the anti-Japanese attitude of outlaw bikers and, despite doing little to boost the finances of the parent company, vastly increased the sales of custom parts, not only for the big V-twins, but also for Japanese engined choppers. Custom parts manufacturing was by now very very big business indeed. Companies like Jammer, Drag Specialities, Custom Chrome and Gary Bang, that had started out only a few years previously making the odd item or two for

chopper-building friends, became household names within the subculture, selling a huge range of products catering for every conceivable stylistic taste. They financed the publication of motorcycle magazines like Easyriders and Street Choppers aimed directly at outlaw bikers, and used these to advertise their wares. By the early seventies, the largest of these companies were turning over millions of dollars worth of business worldwide, bigger manufacturing concerns than most European motorcycle factories - big business indeed.

Presented in the respectable surroundings of custom car shows, choppers were no longer a taboo subject. Society's avant-garde took to them instantly. Inevitably though, the professionals had to go one step beyond and dress them up; at first a little, and then a lot. So much so, in fact, that even the builders acknowledged them as unrideable and consequently left out the internal mechanics of their engines, retaining only a chrome and alloy shell. Anything went - fantasy was, and still is, infinite. Roth, the erstwhile upholder and uncrowned king of the motorcycle underground, moved on to the outworld of moneyed citizens. "Chopping is the latest addition to folk art in America", he stated; but his credibility in the eyes of his former colleagues was permanently shattered and it was left to other stylistic innovators, like Dave Mann, to fully exploit the entrepreneurial potential of custom motorcycle design. During his happier days with the outlaws, Roth had operated a large scale mail order business, producing do-it-yourself chopper booklets, T-shirts and biker posters for mass consumption. The man he employed to paint the posters was a Kansas City beatnik artist called Dave Manning, himself a dedicated proponent of the chopper fraternity. Manning began working for Roth

in 1966 and his wild, fantasised renderings of outlaw life became so popular that they eventually marketed twenty-eight different designs. These ended up hanging on the living room walls of people who had never hitherto even considered purchasing a motorcycle, let alone becoming an outlaw biker.

The bikes in the 'Dave Mann' paintings were outrageous by the standards of the time, but they fired the imaginations of those already aware of the new, more individual approach of true custom building. Mann depicted the chopper as a long, lean warhorse - a bike that looked as if it was going fifty miles-an-hour just parked by the kerb. He achieved the effect by exaggerating the perspective in his paintings, stretching the bikes out with enormously long front forks and spindly frames wrapped around a massive V-twin motor. He had given the chopper its cultural breakthrough.

Wanting the 'Dave Mann look' was one thing however, achieving it was another. Few owner-builders had either the facilities or the mechanical expertise to extend a front end or give a frame additional degrees of rake on their own. In any case, simply modifying existing parts was no longer sufficient to meet the demand for individuality. Thus, paradoxically, a new custom industry was created to meet this demand, producing everything from chromed spike nuts to complete frames - even, in some cases, complete bikes. Now the basis of a multi-million dollar operation, the chopper was very much 'above ground'. Nevertheless, the outlaw clubs, having survived a second and more concentrated wave of adverse publicity followed by the predictable spate of baddie biker movies, maintained the machine's heritage while the business establishment contrived to exploit every possible, and impossible, variation on the theme. More radically

modified than ever before, the outlaws still used their bikes for long, hard riding. Concessions to styling, such as long front forks, were compensated for by radical frame alterations in an attempt to retain at least a semblance of good handling. Fuel tanks could be so small that the rider had to call at every petrol station he passed. The inevitable clash between stylistic whim and functional exigency was rapidly coming to a head. Some states, alarmed at the sudden increase of strange-looking motorcycles on their highways, enacted restrictive vehicle construction legislation in an attempt to curb the excesses, as they had done when hot rodding was all the rage. Handlebar height, seat height,

fork extension and mudguarding all came under close scrutiny, in spite of the fact that there was little or no actual evidence to prove that chopped bikes were any more likely to be involved in accidents than standard factory produced machines. Many states went further and instituted compulsory crash helmet laws, further restricting the freedom of the chopper rider who, in the main, strongly eschewed all forms of personal protection. In the wake of this tide of legislation, a number of local and national bikers' rights organisations came into being, creating an additional bond of unity amongst chopper riders and further increasing the gulf between them and mainstream motorcyclists, for whom a helmet and leathers were logical and very necessary prerequisites for safe riding. Prominent amongst these early bikers' rights campaigners were hardcore outlaw clubs like the Hells Angels, whose Californian chapters formed the nucleus of the Modified Motorcycle Association which successfully thwarted the introduction of a compulsory helmet law in that state. The outlaws were taking steps to protect themselves, but no outlaw, however strong the club he belonged to, relished^{spending} any more time than he had to arguing with the 'law', so even his most outlandish touches were

kept on the legal side of illegal.

Not so the 'straight' custom biker. By 1970, a motorcycle was as much a constituent of the stylish American household as a microwave oven or a video recorder. A customised motorcycle, a chopper, was unquestionably one step ahead of the neighbours in the all important prestige stakes, even though the owner probably never trusted himself aboard it. Show bike innovations, as impracticable in their own way as the over-laden dressers they had been built out of, found their way onto the streets in the hands of the most unlikely looking 'outlaws'. Exhaust pipes towered higher than ever before, frames stretched out front and back and forks got longer and longer. Fortunately though, somewhere along the line, the burgeoning chopper industry paused and took stock of the situation before it got completely out of hand. Wary of further vehicle construction legislation which threatened to bite into their now very considerable profits, the custom bike magazines launched on the wave of the chopper boom began to place much greater stress on the safety aspects of machine construction. Quite suddenly, the Captain America stars and stripe type show bikes, once considered de rigeur for any respectable would-be outlaw, became passe and disappeared from the streets. They had been selfconsciously turned into laughing stock by an industry anxious to assure the government of its safety mindedness. Magazines like Easyriders, for which the redoubtable Dave Mann was now painting centre-spreads, carried sufficient clout with their readership to be able to successfully redefine the image appropriate to a chopper. Custom motorcycles began to diversify widely stylistically, giving rise to a host of different trends - lowriders diggers, cafe racers, fat-bobs, rat bikes - and this diversification inevitably broadened the market for ready-made custom parts, creating a demand which the manufacturers were more than happy to

satisfy.

The outrageously styled choppers of the sixties and early seventies soon lost their appeal amongst both the outlaw fraternity, concerned to maintain their street credibility, and the middle class posers who, becoming disillusioned with the symbolic status value accruing to chopper ownership, moved on to some other fad. These gaudy bikes continued to dominate the show circuit and win prizes for their creators, but were seldom seen in action on the streets being towed from show to show on trailers where their glittering chrome and custom paint could best be protected. The Harley years did however leave their mark; the classic lines of the old rigid frame were carried through into the custom chassies for the new, swinging-arm Japanese bikes and the old Harley springer forks gave rise to a dozen or more variations on a basic theme that is still the most favoured even today. 'Chopping' is no longer a faithful description of the art as a whole though, it has been absorbed into the much wider field of motorcycle customising, a field subdivided by the exponents of several varying styles.

Bikers have become increasingly aware of their own subcultural heritage, and early pre-chopper bob-jobs, when they can be found and pieced together with authentic period custom parts are regarded with the same reverence as precious classics. Indeed, the 'classic look' has become so sought after that custom manufacturers now offer a wide range of antique reproduction parts unavailable from the factory of origin.

Bikes built on the traditional outlaw principle of lean looks and high performance fall into the rather ill-defined category of the 'street racer', a compromise between the chopper proper

and a comparative newcomer to the American scene, the 'cafe racer'. The roughest of guidelines for the uninitiated custom bike spotter would be that a chopper has an extended front fork of some description, a small petrol tank, a certain amount of fibre-glass moulding to clean up the frame lines, an intricate paint design, a high backed seat, a skinny wheel at the front and a fat one at the rear. The cafe racer, on the other hand, is a direct crib of the competition bikes to be seen on the road racing circuit. In the early sixties, in the days before the British motorcyclist knew anything very much about the American motorcycling scene, the most coveted machine was one styled along the lines of the racers of the period. At that time, several manufacturers, notably B.S.A., Norton and Velocette, built limited numbers of 'clubman's racers', highly tuned versions of their standard roadsters. These, together with owner-converted production machines, formed the basis of the British 'ton-up' era. Road racing equipment - lightweight aluminium petrol tanks, low slung 'clip-on' handlebars, rear-set footrests and the like, became a lucrative business with initially the spin-off, and later the major demand coming from the youthful would-be racers.

These youngsters spent their evenings in all-night transport cafes and coffee bars, sipping endless frothy cups of Espresso coffee to the blare of a rock'n'roll jukebox. To punctuate the boredom they made an elaborate ritual of hair-raising, dare-devil rides from one cafe to the next - hence the derivation of the term 'cafe racer'. However, although the cafe racer was the British equivalent of the American chopper, it never successfully developed beyond its initial concept. Essentially it was a plaything of young men in their late teens and early twenties snatching a few high speed thrills before settling down into

'responsible' adulthood. Any further elaboration, once the style had been achieved, was concentrated on making the motor go faster. There were no Ed Roths, no Dave Manns, no spray gun wizards ready to lay down a dozen coats of glittering metalflake or candy paint, no custom shows, no protagonists of the cafe racer art.

Customising in Britain, such as it existed, was the exclusive domain of the scooter riding mods, who lavished vast amounts of time, energy and hard cash cosmetically restyling their Vespas and Lambrettas. In four short years, their motorised fashions progressed from highly ornamental machines sporting chrome plated side-panels, luggage racks and crash-bars, to riding completely stripped-down frames, bereft of all bodywork. Noisy 'sports' silencers were mandatory, and, instead of the experience of high speed, the scooterist's aspiration was to corner his machine with the footboards raising sparks against the tarmac.

As the ton-up boys grew up and the transport cafes on the old arterial roads closed, the cafe racer died - almost. Until the late sixties, American road racing was very much the poor relation of its European counterpart in terms of professional finesse, but altogether richer in terms of prize money. Europe's top works riders regularly participated in major American events to 'show the Yanks the way home', whilst at the same time advertising the attributes of their sponsors' machines. This European input generated a fresh interest in the sport which was to be compounded in 1971 by the setting up of the Anglo-American Transatlantic Match Race Series, a prestigious annual event in which national teams from the United States and Great Britain competed against each other in a series of races held

at tracks on both sides of the Atlantic. Motorcycle manufacturers, keen to exploit this potential source of sales once again started to produce race replicas for sale to the general public. Searching for a new direction, several leading American custom builders recognised the scope offered by the distinctive road racer styling and the cafe racer received a new lease of life on the streets. They had to dress it up a little of course, but underneath the flamboyantly painted streamlining, behind the rose tinted windshield and between the rugged looking cast magnesium-alloy wheels, the cafe racer is alive and well.

Other members of the custom bike elite saw a greater potential in the low-slung styling of the drag bike, a unique two-wheeled monster built for the prime purpose of propelling it's rider from a standing start to the end of a measured quarter mile in the shortest possible time. Drag racing had been immensely popular in the United States since the hot-rod era of the fifties. Virtually every small town boasted its own drag strip and national championships attracted a big following. Many chopper riders had started out in their teens by building drag bikes and there was a well established generic identity between the street chopper and its competition forebear. These machines were little more than incredible powerhouses, often turbo or supercharged, strung in the wispiest of frames between the front and rear wheels. West Coast designers Arlen Ness, Ron Nunes and Jim Jennings championed this radical 'street digger' look, while unbeknown to the others, and hundreds of miles from the custom bike mainstream, Portland, Oregon, exponent Barry Cooney also saw the digger as the solution to the chopper show bike impasse.

In the mid-seventies the street digger, or lowrider as its

stylistic offshoot came to be called, represented the most advanced stage of custom bike building. Ness and Cooney joined forces to develop and refine their protege and other builders, no less skilled or inventive in their art, adapted the theme to suit themselves and their power units. Stylistically, the lowrider still sets the general trend for custom builders throughout the world, although latterly styles have become a great deal more diffuse, with the classic chopper look re-emerging on the streets in a much more sanitary form capable of safe, fast, long distance travel. These replicas of the early Harley and Indian choppers retain their short forks and large petrol tanks and are known as 'fat-bobs'. Whilst they lack the extreme engineering distortions of the show chopper, they are often very finely detailed cosmetically, with many layers of lacquered custom paint, chrome or even gold plating and hand engraved designs adorning the engine cases and fork tubes. The motors too are highly tuned and much greater emphasis is placed on performance capabilities, Harley engines on occasions being stroked (increased in capacity) to as much as 1800 c.c.

For several reasons, the chopper trend was much slower to catch on in Britain. First and foremost, the absence of organised drag racing (it did have its European counterpart known as 'sprinting' but this was very much a minority sport) meant that road bike builders did not share the same stylistic roots as their American cousins. Instead, as previously explained, custom or 'special' builders, as they came to be called, drew their source of inspiration from factory produced road racing motorcycles. Hence the evolution of the cafe racer as a peculiarly British custom form which was very much in vogue during the late fifties and early to mid-sixties. With the demise of the ton-up

boys, similar machines fell into the hands of their subcultural successors, the rockers, who had little interest in changing what they traditionally regarded as part of their heritage. They felt beholden to live up to the image that had been created for them, restricting any customising urges they may have had to interchanging different manufacturers' engines and chassies in an attempt to establish their own ideal combination of speed and handling. The resultant hybrids became known by a variety of popular acronyms such as Triton, Norvin, Tribsa and the like, the initials standing to signify the parentage of the machine in question - i.e. the Triton consisted of a Norton 'featherbed' frame, generally considered to be possessed of superior handling qualities, housing a Triumph engine, renowned for its power output and mechanical longevity; whilst a Norvin was a similar blend of Norton chassis and big Vincent V-twin engine, and so on.

Unless one of these hybrids was being constructed, major frame alterations were rare. In most cases, the frame/engine configuration would remain unchanged - but, given the basic set-up, a cafe racer would be created on top. The ingredients were simple, a rider could take his pick from a range of factory produced bolt-on parts - higher speed rated tyres, 'bacon slicer' coolers on the front brake drum, chrome headlamp shell complete with peak, lightweight fork covers, drop handlebars, sculptured alloy or fibre-glass petrol tank, swept-back or high-level exhaust pipes with only rudimentary silencers, hump-backed racing seat, skimpy alloy mudguards, alloy wheel rims, racing shock absorbers, etc., etc. - which could be acquired week by week from the local bike shop as the pay packet allowed, and be bolted into place piecemeal, so that the bike gradually evolved into a finished product. The majority of cafe racer riders didn't bother to go the whole way and modify the engine internals, but

for a relatively modest outlay they could certainly look the part. The most popular models for this treatment were the big home-produced Triumph and B.S.A. twins primarily, along with Nortons, Matchlesses, Royal Enfields and Velocettes, but virtually anything that wasn't too small, too staid, or too unaffordable, was pushed into service. These 'cowboy' bikes were much derided by the motorcycling establishment - at any rate that part of the motorcycling establishment which wasn't in receipt of the very considerable revenue expended on them - and their riders dismissed as not being 'proper motorcyclists'. There was however some basis for criticism: almost without exception these machines were ridden fast and recklessly, and the resulting accidents caused by pushing these home built racers to the limits gave rise to widespread public alarm.

However, as the sixties drew to a close, the British cafe racer, in common with the rocker subculture which sustained it, was in decline. The road riding subculture had become so far estranged from its roots in the race circuits that any generic connection between the cafe racer and its mechanical antecedent, the track racer, was tenuous. Something new was developing around this time though, and that was the slow awareness of the American chopper. Ironically, whilst the Americans were on the verge of 'discovering' and adopting the cafe racer style, the British were beginning to cast it aside as outdated. In Britain, imported magazines like Ed Roth's Choppers were rare and much prized, but what could be seen within them was revolutionary. The American chopper had developed in radically different ways from the British custom bike, to fit a different set of circumstances. American conditions were entirely unlike those in the United Kingdom, and the bikes looked strange to the conservative British eye, but they were dramatic and adventurous, and soon

home-grown copies started appearing on the streets. At first the trickle was slow, and then something phenomenal happened - Easy Rider.

Easy Rider came out of nowhere - and had a major impact on the bikers of that generation, an impact which has only really tailed off in recent years as the British customising scene has become more self-reliant. The movie was a catalyst, it showed two things: firstly, a whole new lifestyle based on the dream of freedom and the romance of the open road, and secondly, the bikes themselves - radical choppers which left the British bikers gasping. In 1969, any number of British bikers - and more who hadn't realised that they were bikers - saw Easy Rider and attempted to put together what they imagined to be reasonable facsimiles of Fonda's Harley chopper. Harleys being at something of a premium in this country, apart from some sluggish sidevalve models abandoned by the American armed forces at the conclusion of World War II, the bikers proceeded to tear down their trusty Triumph and B.S.A. cafe racers and rebuild them into the new style. Many were horrific in concept, desperately ugly and staggeringly unsafe - aesthetic and mechanical monstrosities looked upon as objects of derision by the 'straight' bike press. What saved the day, however, and assured the continued existence of British custom biking, was a small number of very talented professional builders who possessed both the mechanical expertise and the insight to understand that choppers could be big money spinners. A host of dubious back-street dealers, hoping to reap a quick profit, jumped on the bandwagon and started building choppers or selling chopper parts. Many of them were under-capitalised, untalented and inexperienced. They produced gaudy, shoddy goods to sell to kids with Easy Rider stars in their eyes, gullible enough to buy anything with the description chopper

attached. But some names stood out - in Frayton, Berkshire, John Reed and his partner Dave Clifford were running 'Uncle Bunt's Chop Shop' out of a tin shack with an earth floor. Reed, a hippie turned bike mechanic, had visited the States and seen for himself what quality chopper stylists like Ed Roth and Arlen Ness were doing, and soon set about crusading for the cause in Britain. And, just across the Thames from the plush Chelsea emporium of official U.K. Harley-Davidson concessionaire Fred Warr, Ray Leon was making a name for himself as 'the man who chops Harleys'. In Wimbledon, the 'Bespoke Buggy Company' marketed their ready made Triumph Spyder chopper, and in Crawley, the Sussex Speed Shop advertised that they would build anything to order. The day of the British custom shop had arrived.

So too had the biker movies - Wild Angels, Cycle Savages, Hells Angels '69 and half a dozen more with progressively thinning plots, but some memorable machinery - and, perhaps most importantly, the custom magazines. Not unnaturally, many British chopper builders clung dogmatically to the worst aspect of the American fashion. Pounds of fibre-glass moulding smothered frames, forks were extended beyond any reasonable safety limit, and chrome was applied indiscriminately to every metallic part, but as the magazines and the custom shops began to set the stylistic pace, a degree of sanity crept in and engineering functionality once again assumed precedence over chrome plate. As Uncle Bunt's, Leon-Wallace Customs (Ray Leon had by this time teamed up with talented artist John Wallace.) and the Bespoke Buggy Company set new standards in custom bike building, distinctly British styles of chopper were emerging, and some of the horrors which had been built around totally inappropriate basic machines were starting to fall by the wayside. No self-respecting outlaw biker wanted

to be accused of bad taste, and a great deal of personal and club pride rested upon the 'rightness' of the bike he rode. The leading exponents of the art were themselves hardcore bikers and were not fuelled by commercial concern primarily, but by a genuine interest in the future wellbeing of their fellow bikers. They were fed up with the slavish reliance upon American styling and sought to inject their own ideas. They started manufacturing their own ranges of off-the-shelf custom parts, thus broadening the possibilities for the individual builder. In general though, British chopper styles still mirrored the Americans, their imitations but a shadow of the 'real thing' - the flights of fantasy of the likes of Ed Roth were beyond the reach of the British - as it seemed the simple classiness of the American street bikes were too.

The next big force on the biker scene arrived at much the same time - and that was the public awareness of the American patch-wearing outlaws in general, and the Californian Hells Angels in particular. The headlines were lurid, and brought in their wake a flood of pulp 'biker fiction', principally from the presses of the New English Library. But, whatever Uncle Sid and Auntie Flo may have thought of the fictional Angels' doings, the books did spark off considerable interest from British bikers in forming similar clubs of their own. These early British outlaw club members had no time at all for the styling eccentricities of the British chopper artists. In common with their American precursors they were not prepared to bargain away the functional advantages of motorcycling - speed, manoeuvrability, etc. in the interests of fashion. They did of course seek the symbolic status which the chopper afforded within the wider subculture, but had no interest in exploiting its potential

as an artform. Despite having unashamedly appropriated the outlaw style from America, the British bikers could not completely sever themselves from their domestic subcultural antecedents, the rockers. True, the leather-clad image was fast becoming passe, but status accruing to the 'fastest guy on the street' was, and still is, tremendously important. In the United States, where mile upon mile of highway cruising was the order of the day for most bikers, the straight-line stability of the long wheelbase chopper posed few problems, but on the narrow, winding roads of the British Isles, it was a positive hazard. Thus, the chopper was duly tailored to fit British conditions, and the more outlandish variations on the theme relegated to the floor of the custom show.

The next development was entirely unpredictable (unless of course one was a student of popular American trends) - the chopper started to become fashionable. And, just as the injection of mass commercialism had destroyed other subcultures - had castrated the ted and mod fashions, and would, a decade later, suck the lifeblood out of punk - so the whole thing might have crashed. By 1971, Norton, one of the most conservative U.K. motorcycle manufacturers, was already offering a cosmetically 'chopped' version of their popular top-of-the-range Commando model - the 'Hi-Rider'. An Italian factory, Fantic, even went so far as to produce a moped based chopper, a 50 c.c. replica of Peter Fonda's Captain America Harley, complete with stars and stripes paint job and pedals. Posters of naked women adorning choppers were everywhere, home-grown trashy films started appearing, and advertising agency bosses decreed that custom bikes could sell totally unrelated products, usually unsuccessfully. In some ways though this superficial image diffusion was a good thing, it strengthened the whole movement and a sure fact emerged - while

youth cultures in general tended to not last very long at all before individuals moved on into something else, bikers were coming into things in their teens and were staying with it right into middle age.

In the early days, apart from a few none too well publicised events, the chopper world did not have a concerted public face, where they gathered, only those already in the know came to look - this was to change suddenly and dramatically. In the mid-seventies the custom car craze boomed in Britain. It was a big bubble that never had any real base - either in terms of commercial outlets or in the commitment of enthusiasts over a long period - but it hit the media in a big big way. Two important things emerged with it - Custom Car magazine which propogated the art of custom building far beyond the traditional cognoscenti, and a U.K. show circuit which brought its products to the notice of the general public, whilst at the same time setting new styling trends amongst builders. Custom Car itself ran big shows and, from 1976 onwards, it was rivalled by the Manchester based Rod and Custom Shows which attracted very large numbers indeed. Space at these shows was, somewhat grudgingly - accorded to bikes - more often than not in the alley at the back by the toilets, as at the Alexandra Palace shows - but nevertheless they were achieving a status in their own right. Several other smaller venues started too, and what happened was that the bike shows were, in effect, held seperately within the car shows. As the custom car fad peaked and then started to tail off, custom bike building grew enormously on the back of it.

The car events died away and new bike-only shows took their place. British bikers at last felt confident enough to do things for themselves without constantly turning to the States for

inspiration. In 1979, the Hells Angels themselves organised an open-air custom bike show, the first event of its type in Britain. I asked them why:

Snake:

"Well, up until that time custom bikes had always taken second place to cars. The established shows were all basically car shows with a few token choppers thrown in for good measure. We were regarded very much as the poor relations of the custom world and our exhibits were shoved away in dark corners, well out of sight of the punters. The organisers didn't exactly go out of their way to attract hoards of greasy bikers who might upset their respectable customers ... Bikers, including us, who went along to these shows were always moaning and complaining about getting a raw deal, and it occurred to us that maybe we could have a go at organising a custom show ourselves ... We figured that we knew what was needed, a show run by bikers for bikers, not by a bunch of rip-off businessmen ... We gave bikers in this country something they wanted, something they could relate to. We weren't treating them like second class citizens and we weren't ripping them off. We were giving people the opportunity to see some of the street customs available, in a setting where they could let their hair down and party in the company of other bikers, without having a whole lot of rules and restrictions governing their behaviour.

"It was their show and it still is, and it's their responsibility to keep themselves in order. I mean, if everybody suddenly decided to go over the top at once there's nothing that we could do to stop it, and in the past six years we've had no trouble whatsoever, and we've never even had to throw anyone out. That's how much bikers respect our show ... Come

to that, we haven't had one bike nicked from the site in all that time, which must be some sort of a record."

Why would you say that is?

Snake:

"Because we treat bikers like responsible adults. They know that they're not going to get hassled, that they can get stoned out of their brains and have a good time. We don't want to act like policemen, bikers get enough of that on the streets. We trust people to conduct themselves properly and we haven't been let down yet. Even the old bill wander around the site with smiles on their faces - there's nothing for them to do except enjoy themselves ..."

Isn't something like this in danger of becoming not so much a custom bike show but more a general thing, like some sort of vast social event, like a pop festival?

Fagin:

"Oh yeah ... that's right ... It's like when we said we'd perhaps move to somewhere bigger, the only danger of that is you get too commercial and it becomes more businesslike. What we want to try and get is a close sort of family atmosphere, if you know what I mean, of everybody partying together ... Really it's just one big party. It goes on for a weekend, and perhaps the bikes are incidental to the whole atmosphere of the whole thing. It's really just compressing a biker lifestyle into perhaps a weekend, so that everybody can do what they want to do for that weekend. But if you try and expand it too much and get too commercial you might lose some of that. And that's where you've got to be very careful."

How do you see that biker lifestyle though? What goes to make

that up?

Fagin:

"Well you don't make any rules. They can just come here and do what they want ... And if you just supply the music and the beer and somewhere to do it all, and have people here of ... the same sort, then it just happens ..."

Can you tell a biker if he's not on a bike - if he's simply walking down the road? How can you tell?

Fagin:

"His attitude to life I think ... They're just people who like partying and enjoying themselves ... If you go to any other sort of atmosphere, take an example like a pop festival, pop festivals would be something similar. But if you go to something like a race meeting, then it's not like this at all, bike racing or whatever, it's a different sort of atmosphere. Everybody's together here, it doesn't matter who they are ... People from one end of the country to the other, everybody's partying together."

The Kent Custom Bike Show is primarily concerned with road ridden custom motorcycles, professional builders being discouraged from entering. I asked the Angels why this was:

Snake:

"Because as far as we're concerned street biking is what it's all about. I mean, what the hell's the point of building something that's impossible to ride around on? No bloody point at all ..."

"We've never wanted to attract professional builders. We set out to cater specifically for the street biker, and what the street biker wants is to see the sort of bikes that can be ridden

on the road, not million dollar Christmas trees that don't even run. That's why we stipulate that all show entries have to be ridden in. Okay, we can't prevent guys trucking bikes along in vans and offloading them a mile or two up the road, but we do our best to enforce the rule ... I honestly believe that by adopting that policy from the very beginning we've not only maintained our own credibility, but we've also altered the entire face of British customising as well...

"For a start, custom bikes have become more rideable and more widespread. How many rubbishy chops do you see on the road these days? Very few ... We've shown people that you don't have to build outrageous crap to get attention ... These days, subtlety's the name of the game, a blend of what looks good and rides well. Last year's 'best of show' was a black Norvin (A cafe-racer with Norton chassis and Vincent engine.) for Chris-sakes, you can't get much more subtle than that. I like to think that we've brought custom biking back to the masses, back to where it came from, back to the amateur builder ...

"The Hells Angels realise, probably more than most people, just how important it is to fight for the things you believe in. We see the Kent Show very much as a focal point for the biker lifestyle, a demonstration of the solidarity that exists within that lifestyle. If the Camping Bill had gone on the statute books there would have been no more Kent Custom Bike Shows. In the 1970s, the Night Assemblies Act virtually killed off open-air rock festivals, and we don't aim to go the same way. Likewise, if stringent type approval regulations are introduced, like in West Germany, bikers simply aren't going to be allowed to ride custom bikes on the road, and we most definitely don't want to see that happen.

"We love them and ride them too you know. It's our way of life that the bureaucrats are out to destroy, and we support anybody who is campaigning to preserve that way of life. We don't look upon the Kent Show as purely a money-making exercise. If we did, we would have capitalised on the music, put on big name bands, and filled the place with headbangers. Last year we had around 20,000 bikers through the gate, and there was no let up for hours and hours. Even at dawn on the Saturday morning there was still an unbroken stream of chops queuing up outside. It was amazing, a kind of pilgrimage ..."

What kind of symbolic value does your bike have for you?
(laughter all round)

Brendan:

"Symbolic value? Jesus Christ ... (more laughter). What do you want me to say? Penis extensions and all that? When Loser (a fellow club member) was in the nick once a psychiatrist asked him about all that. Loser punched him in the mouth and told him to mind his own business. I don't think that was quite the answer the guy was looking for ..."

No, no, no you know what I mean. What sort of part does it play in your life?

Brendan:

"I don't know... It's not a thing that I consciously analyse ... I think that a lot of people imagine that the great thing is to build a chrome plated chopper and to thrash it at maximum revs and everyone says, 'Cor look at that. Isn't it fantastic'. A lot of it to me, in building a custom bike, is to put something on the road that I have actually created myself with my own hands, that a factory hasn't given to me and said, 'Here you are, this

is our product, you take it or leave it.' I think it's just a great feeling to be able to build something and to look at it and say, 'This is my own creation', and to talk to people who feel the same way.

"I go everywhere on my bike, I don't own a car and I don't want to. Whenever I park up somebody comes over to me and talks about it, even people who've never had a bike themselves. They respect the craftsmanship, the way it's built. They might not like me very much, but they really like the bike. I guess that's a good thing because people will talk to us who wouldn't do otherwise. Even the police are interested in what we ride. They pull us over just to have a look, not to hassle us or anything. I kind of like that ..."

CHAPTER XVI : FROM MAMAS TO MOTOR MAIDS - THE ROLE OF WOMEN
IN THE BIKER SUBCULTURE

"We live like Chinese and Indian days ... where the women takes care of the man ... and does everything for him to make him feel like a man ... It's very important. Now these days, these girls are always out on the street and they couldn't cook anything, you know boil eggs or shit. They're always out on the street worrying what they look like and shit. A Hells Angels woman ... she's really something. Because if she ever left a Hells Angel and she went with a citizen, let me tell you, that citizen, it'd be like a gift to him." 133

A San Francisco Hells Angel

"The reason I ride this bike is because I love it. Doing a ton on this you feel like the world is coming to an end.

"It's true that Bonnies are macho, and blokes who are in it for that are worried by me - a five-foot-two woman handling one blows their cover. I went into some pub with Trevor, my husband, wearing my jacket with the Triumph badge on it, and this biker starts chatting to Trevor about Bonneville's. 'Actually it's hers', says Trevor. 'Oh yes,' says this bloke, and immediately starts trying to catch me out, talking about timing chests and what do I do about low oil pressure. Well, I like talking bikes, and I'd rather go through that sort of aggressive stuff than be packed off into a corner to talk about perms with the pillions. But I'm not a competitive person, and I don't like people trying to put me down. Often that's what you get from traditional bikers - that or they pretend that you don't exist; and the girls are just bemused. Men dictate the conventions of biking, and they suffer by it as well, there are images that they're meant to fit into as well. I don't want to emasculate biking, it is about power and speed and oil, but

women are strong and can enjoy that too ...

"Your bloke's attitude is very important. When I first started my boyfriend wasn't a biker and was very discouraging; that didn't stop me, but when I met Trevor, whose attitude is 'ride what you bloody well like', it was a real relief. Normally it's either 'you shouldn't be doing this you're a bird' or 'If you're so good then do this.' There was one guy who wouldn't leave me alone until I'd ridden his Katana. I didn't want to ride his bloody Katana! I hate riding other people's bikes anyway, in case something does happen, and I really didn't like his attitude. He went on and on about it, so I finally rode it just to shut him up, and it worked because he's hardly spoken to me since. I don't know what his problem was. If I do show off, it's to prove that British bikes are up to it, not that women are. People make too much of an issue of being a woman - I'm just a person on a bike. 'Woman' always gets dragged in even when it's irrelevant."¹³⁴

A woman biker

The motorcycling revolution that has in the past twenty years swept the western world is undoubtedly one of the most egalitarian movements to strike. It transcends racial, religious and economic boundaries, but is not normally thought to include women amongst its ranks, except in an entirely passive role, as appendages of their bike-riding boyfriends. For all the shiny, candy-appled-and-chromed paint jobs appearing on the market, motorcycles are still conceived with men in mind. Their very design is centred around the male apparel, if not the male anatomy, and no manufacturer, apart from the relatively short-lived scooter boom, has attempted to build a motorcycle with 'woman appeal'. True, there are open framed mopeds on the market aimed at commuters and shoppers, which are advertised with women

users in mind, but these are hardly glamorous 'mean machines' like those aimed at the male market, and the limited size of their engines and their consequently mundane performance levels render them useless for anything more than utility purposes.

Motorcycle clothing is also overwhelmingly designed for its macho appeal - full-face helmets have a tendency to ruin hair-dos and black leathers on a woman take on sexual rather than functional connotations. What can be considered slightly raunchy for a man will not do much for a woman, with the exception of labelling her a sexual deviant, a 'butch', a 'dyke', or a 'lez'. In fact, less than 5 per cent of motorcycle riders are women, and whilst there are some notable exceptions, it is still predominantly a man's world.

A survey by the American motorcycle magazine Cycle, taken in October, 1970, said that the average rider who read the magazine was 25.7 years old, earned \$11,708 annually, and had a 55 per cent chance of being a White-collar businessman. Of these businessmen, 41 per cent were executives, managerial or professional, all of which is a fairly long way from the average person's idea of riders being leather-jacketted ruffians. And yet, however respectable the majority of motorcyclists might be, that respectability did not, in the main, extend to encompass women.

The early motorcyclists were fairly individualistic souls. They looked upon motorcycles not as virility-enhancing symbols, but rather as swift, noisy and sometimes uncomfortable vehicles that offered them an unparalleled sense of freedom in motion and an almost pioneering thrill of reaching a destination. Psychological theories were not bandied about as freely as they are today, and if they were considered to be a little bit strange, at least their sexual orientation was not openly debated by all and sundry. The original outlook has changed somewhat since then, and more

than a few bikers now sit astride their machines in order to restore a failing machismo. In this respect, the multi-million pound advertising campaigns have paid off handsomely. Motorcycles rank alongside karate black belts and Brylcreem for their virility quotient. Own one and you're a man, regardless of your ability to ride it. Bikes are pedalled as 'equalisers', a step short of a sawn-off shotgun, but much higher up the ladder than a Charles Atlas do-it-yourself-muscles-course. A nine stone weakling aboard a Harley-Davidson will look fairly impressive and the chances are that no-one will mess with him, at least not while he keeps moving. The non-biking population has applied to both the motorcycle and its rider the age-old formula of association: if the bike is big, so, probably, is its owner. The larger the bike, the fiercer the rider, and vice versa.

Speed and power have become equated with strength and manliness, as if sheer horsepower were the equivalent of bulging muscles and pugilistic inclinations. The nature and form of the motorcycle advertisements displayed prominently in the media are not accidental. Rather they're calculated, well planned and superbly executed manoeuvres designed to exploit man's greatest insecurities - weakness and impotence. They do wondrously well, and in doing so well, virtually exclude women from participation in all but the most marginal capacity.

In Britain, it is not recorded by the Department of Transport just how many women are licensed to ride motorcycles, nor what percentage of the total bike riding population they form, but it is certainly true to say that they are very much in the minority. Nevertheless, there is a strong tradition of female participation within the motorcycle subculture which stretches back as far as the pioneering days when women could be seen

competing with men on a wide scale in all manner of sporting events, astride machines marketed by the enterprising manufacturers of the day as 'ladies' models'. In the 1930's, when motorcycling was a fashionable bourgeois pastime, many women took to the roads on powered two-wheelers without a hint of stigma, but since the second world war however female participation has not been so marked, and women riders have been largely relegated to the commuter market.

On any working day, in any major British town, female commuters and shoppers aboard small-capacity motorcycles and mopeds can be seen zipping in and out of the traffic with alacrity, blissfully unaware or, more probably, totally unconcerned, that they are challenging conventional belief that motorcycles are the preserve of leather-clad macho men. Only a tiny minority of them however are likely to go beyond the utilisation of a motorcycle for the purely instrumental purposes of shopping and commuting, and arrive at the point where they view their mount as a central life focus around which to order their socio-cultural hopes and aspirations. And, if consulted, few, if any, would lay claim to themselves as being bikers, whatever they took that term to mean. Rather, it is exceedingly likely that the vast majority would, in common with a high percentage of the population as a whole, greet with alarm any suggestion that they belong to the same subcultural genre which was responsible for spawning such antisocial folk devils as the mods and rockers or the Hells Angels.

Those women who aspire to becoming bikers and mixing it with the men on large-capacity roadburners are more often than not the daughters of enthusiastic motorcyclists who have been well schooled from birth to accept riding a bike as the 'natural' thing to do. Either that, or they have had boyfriends who have

encouraged them to 'get on and have a go for yourself.'

Those who do make it over the hurdle from pillion to pilot are generally widely respected by their male peers for making the effort and are accorded an equal standing within the subculture, except in the case of outlaw clubs, to whose ranks they are specifically excluded. But, for most girls, the hurdle remains insurmountable, parental and peer group pressure being sufficient to keep them firmly glued to the back seat, if not off the motorcycle altogether. The majority of fathers regard the possibility of their daughter taking to the road on two wheels with trepidation, not to say outright antagonism, considering motorcycles to be noisy, dirty and dangerous. They would rather pay out for driving lessons and assist in the purchase of a car than give their blessing to their daughter's acquisition of even the slowest, most inoffensive moped. It's bad enough when your teenage son starts dressing up in leather and coming home at all hours, waking up the neighbours with the sound of his exhausts, but when your daughter ...

The prevailing social attitude which militates against bikers in general is often infinitely worse when it comes to women members of the subculture, especially those who have yet to make the big break from pillioning to owning and riding their own bike. The wearing of leather clothing is erroneously identified - by those non-motorcyclists in the community who have never had the misfortune to experience the painful aftermath of a bout of 'gravel rash' as a result of the abrasive effect of tarmac on skin during a slide down the road - with sexual promiscuity and generally 'unladylike' behaviour, and lurid stories routinely splashed across the media concerning the violent, drug-crazed doings of Hells Angels, rockers, greasers or ton-up boys, not to mention the well-publicised annual

accident and fatality rates amongst two-wheeled road users, taken together tend to have an extremely salutary effect indeed when it comes to a concerned parent giving his or her approval for their female offspring to sally forth alone on anything more adventurous than a pedal-assisted shopping conveyance.

Strong parental disapproval can hit an aspirant female motorcyclist materially as well as psychologically. The express refusal of a father to sign guarantor to a hire purchase agreement can mean that the necessary finance needed to buy the bike in the first place will not be forthcoming, something which is far more of a handicap to girls than boys, the latter usually enjoying a peer group nexus from their early teens onwards within which bikes rank alongside football as a central life interest, and for whom there is a ready availability of cheap secondhand parts and machines, plus a fund of collective knowledge which helps to legitimise motorcycling as an activity appropriate for boys to indulge in. Some schools run their own off-road motorcycle training schemes designed to equip pupils to face the hazards they will encounter once they are old enough to legally obtain a licence. Such schemes are almost always monopolised by boys, falling as they do within the traditional ambit of male education. So the boys have a head start over their female classmates, not only when it comes to learning how to ride a motorcycle but, equally importantly, in terms of gaining access to the junior division of the motorcycle subculture which serves to promote and sustain an interest in motorcycling over and above that experienced by the lone moped rider.

Girls who might aspire to joining the group are often discouraged from doing so, not only by the boys, but also by their own female schoolfriends, who tend to regard motorcycling with,

at best, bored disinterest, and at worst, complete disdain. Magazines specifically aimed at a teenage schoolgirl readership seldom, if ever, give over their pages to features eulogising the joys of bike riding and eugenic promoters employed to serve the needs of the music and fashion industries go out of their way to avoid promoting an image that they see as being totally passe, and therefore unprofitable. Boys' magazines, on the other hand, see nothing wrong with their readers taking an interest in matters mechanical, presenting the attendant pursuits of riding and driving as healthy, virile, desirable, fulfilling and, above all, eminently masculine activities. In the boys' market, the acquisition of a motorcycle is but one small step up the ladder from the ownership of a B.M.X. bicycle, and the multitude of ancilliary products which can be foisted on to gullible teenagers by advertisers and P.R. men offers a very lucrative area for expansion. Motorcycling is thus actively promoted as a boys' activity, with the net result that girls are virtually excluded from participation.

On occasions, girls who have left school and are in a position to buy their own motorcycle without recourse to a hire-purchase agreement may meet such profound parental disapproval that they are forced to leave home to pursue their chosen objective, either that or give up the idea completely. If they find themselves unable or unwilling to split from the family home in order to take up what most people would regard as something entirely spurious, then they will more than likely take up driving a car and forego any ambition that they might once have had to ride a bike. Motorcycling is not generally considered to be a subject on which to make a principled stand against parental authority, especially when that stand might result in homelessness. So, all in all, when it comes to

gaining access to the motorcycle subculture at an early age, girls have the odds stacked heavily against them. Small wonder then that the ranks of the subculture are predominantly male.

Motorcycle advertising, in common with the majority of products competing for attention in a predominantly male market are, in the main, unashamedly sexist. The leading monthly magazines are full of nubile young women draped semi-nude across bikes in an effort to restore increasingly flagging sales of new models, and every conceivable motorcycle related accessory, from tyres to crash helmets, has in recent years 'benefitted' from an overabundant injection of sexist hype designed to identify the product in question with male sexual potency. The inference being that even the puniest of nine stone weaklings can speedily improve his bird-pulling capacity if he takes himself off down to his local motorcycle dealer and shells out several thousand pounds on the very latest high-tech, state-of-the-art Honda, Kawasaki, Yamaha, Suzuki, Moto-Guzzi, Harley-Davidson, Lucati, etc., etc., etc. This near ubiquitous marketing strategy, whilst serving to further alienate potential female bike buyers, has signally failed in its objective of broadening the appeal of two-wheeled transport beyond its traditional buyers' market, and as the sale of new bikes continue to plummet unabated, manufacturers are beginning to return to the tried and tested approach of concentrating on the performance and handling capabilities of their products rather than relying on sex as the universal panacea.

In October 1985, following a particularly poor sales season in which their share of the British market dropped to an all time low, Suzuki, a Japanese manufacturer with a long history of sexist advertising, did a dramatic about turn whilst debuting their latest range at the International Motorcycle Show and publicly denounced their competitors' use of women to sell motor-

cycles. A company spokesman stated: "Anything that discourages manufacturers from using women in a degrading way is progress in the right direction."¹³⁵ It is however widely believed within the motorcycle trade that Suzuki's change of heart has more to do with declining profits than it has to do with any sudden attack of conscience about the degradation of women. It remains to be seen whether other manufacturers will follow suit or continue to use sex to sell motorcycles.

But if the manufacturers have on an individual basis, for whatever reason, decided to revise their approach to sexist advertising, sexism is still concretely bound up with the marketing of motorcycles as a generic commodity. Many works racing teams, including Suzuki, starved of company funds, have begun to turn instead to soft porn men's magazines in search of much needed sponsorship deals. In Britain, both Penthouse and Men Only have considerable amounts of time and money invested in motorcycle racing. The publishers of Men Only, who have in recent months launched an extensive joint promotional project with the Heron Suzuki team made their position clear in a statement to the influential motor magazine Motorcycling Weekly:

"The motorcycle and men's magazine markets are very similar in that the bulk of customers are young single men", explained Neville Player, Editor of Men Only.

"We are planning to feature more motorcycling in the magazine. We see motorcycle racing as an exciting developing sport and are sure that in years to come it will be on a par internationally with Formula One car racing."¹³⁶

Club International too have been quick to jump upon the biking bandwagon and currently run a regular monthly motorcycling feature cum road test written by the magazine's very

own female biker, who is somewhat ironically perhaps the only fully employed woman journalist in the entire motorcycling field. It is however little more than a thinly veiled excuse to exhibit yet more nude models in Club's pages, this time surrounded by bikes. It seems likely that such practices will continue as long as motorcycles continue to be publicly identified as male virility symbols, and as long as men's magazines are prepared to hand out large sums of money in sponsorship deals to hard up factory racing teams.

Whatever the truth of the matter, there is a predominant and lasting image which springs to mind whenever the subject of women is mentioned in the context of the motorcycle subculture. That image is the quintessential one of the rocker's 'bird', dumb and immobile, perched passively on the pillion seat of her boyfriend's bike as he roars defiantly along the highway. 'The bird', in this interpretation, is not a person in her own right, she has no control over her passage through the elements and absolutely no say in either the direction or the velocity of that passage. She is worse than second class, being regarded as a mere acoutrement, a bolt-on accessory, in much the same way as certain custom parts or items of clothing might be deemed necessary to enhance the totality of the subcultural package. 'The bird' becomes an obligation, without which the rider would be found wanting in the eyes of both his peer group nexus and the outside world. 'The bird' is only prized by her mate in so far as she can maintain this dualistic role of attraction and subservience: attraction in that she must appear desirable to other bikers in order to qualify as acceptable; and subservient in that she must at all times remain subordinate to the wishes of her 'old man', dependent upon him both for her mobility and her access to the subculture and subcultural activities. So long as she can continue to do so, she will be

considered 'respectable' and a 'hands off' policy will operate towards her, her boyfriend accruing important status points in the process. If she fails, however, the standing of both herself and her partner will be considerably diminished, she may be sexually abused, ostracised or even exiled from the group, chances of further access to subcultural activities being denied to her.

Oddly enough, it was the rapidly expanding custom biker movement of the late 1960s, with its doctrine of machismo and its uncompromisingly sexist magazines, that opened up fresh avenues of involvement for women within the motorcycle subculture. Prior to the arrival of Easy Rider, it was rare indeed to catch sight of a woman aboard her own motorcycle. No self-respecting rocker would have entertained teaching his bird to ride a bike, let alone encourage her to go out and buy one of her own. The bird knew her place, and that place was on the pillion seat behind her bloke. She moved when he moved, travelled when he travelled, jumped when he said jump, and kept very quiet when he talked about bikes with his mates, which he did do almost all of the time. The rocker girls - long hair, pony tails, tight jeans and leather jackets - chatted together in lookalike groups on the fringes of the action, preened themselves in steamy mirrors, fetched the espresso coffees, carried the helmets and dreamed of the day when their boyfriends would march them down the aisle to a life of suburban domestic bliss.

Many of the most committed rocker girls started their career as runaways in transport cafes on the outskirts of London, an unending source of wide-eyed innocents deposited there by lorry drivers who, having exchanged a 'ride for a ride', were more than anxious to rid themselves of their juvenile pick-up and get off home to the wife. With nowhere to go and nobody to go there

with, they were easily seduced into the heady world of black leather and loud motorcycles, which certainly had more going for it than the delights of Wigan pier on a wet Wednesday afternoon,

Apart from riding their motorcycles in a reckless fashion and listening to their beloved rock 'n' roll records, sex was a major form of recreation for the rockers. Drugs being virtually unobtainable and in any case universally despised owing to their association with the rockers' despised anti-subculture, the mods, and alcohol being unavailable in the transport cafes that were their perpetual haunt, the nightly bout of bird pulling leading to the occasional 'bunk-up' achieved an almost ritualistic significance within the subculture. Such activities, in the days before the pill, would, inevitably, sooner or later lead those involved to the altar and the replacement of the bike by a Morris Minor or some other much more mundane form of transport. Children had no part to play in the life of the rocker and his bird, and when pregnancy did ensue, the couple concerned would almost always 'do the decent thing', get married and sever all ties with the subculture.

Rockers would clash violently with one another in arguments over women and, quite often, the subjects of such scraps, the birds, would themselves fight it out in competition for the affections of a rocker. But the trouble never lasted long and grudges were seldom born - "It was something we had to do wasn't it? If a bloke in the caff started screwing (staring at) your bird you had to do something about it, even if the bloke concerned was your best mate. It was expected of you. If you didn't have a go at him, all the other blokes would think you were a chicken and you couldn't have that. So you got up and did your bit and then it was all forgotten ...

"Women who followed the rockers used to have a terrible name in those days, it was really unfair. Their mums and dads would call 'em scrubbers - I don't think the word slag was in use back then. But most of 'em were lovely girls ..."¹³⁷

In the case of the outlaw's 'old lady', or the largely mythical Hells Angel's 'mama', this subordinate image is even more extreme. Stories of how club members habitually use and abuse their womenfolk are both legion within and without the subculture, and in particular, the one that everybody knows a variation of, about the Angel on a run who, finding himself out of money and gas, trades his mama to a forecourt attendant in exchange for a gallon of petrol and/or a packet of cigarettes. Thompson, amongst others, cites such behaviour as an example of the extreme treatment meted out by outlaws to their wives and girlfriends. According to him:

"One night in Sacramento the Angels ran out of beer money and decided to auction off Mama Lorraine in a bar. The top bid was twelve cents, and the girl laughed along with the others. On another occasion, Magoo (a leading member of the San Francisco Angels) was packing Mama Beverly on a run to Bakersfield when he ran out of gas. 'Do you know', he recalls, 'I couldn't find a single gas station attendant who would give me a free gallon of gas for a go at her.'"¹³⁸

But, as Thompson freely admits, such stories were unfailingly unverifiable, not only by fellow club members, but also by the women supposedly involved in these transactions. He posits that the victims 'don't like to think about it, much less talk', but it seems unlikely indeed that witnesses to what is after all reputed to be a routine Hells Angels activity could not be found. What appears more likely is that, if it was ever done, then it was 'done for a laugh' and not intended as a

serious proposition at all. However, in relating his act of machismo, real or imagined, to his peers, the outlaw concerned would be seen to have 'class', and therefore others would inevitably lay claim to similar or even more outrageous acts. During the course of my research I have not been able to verify the incidence of such behaviour, either presently or in the past. When I asked the group of Kent Angels what they thought of these stories, all accepted them to be true, but none could lay claim to having actually witnessed similar events, and were indignant about stories which had recently appeared in the press testifying to the effect that they regularly abused women. As Snake told me:

"Some of our guys, their old ladies have been with them ten, twelve, fifteen years, and if the abuse was as rife as it's supposed to be there is no way that they would be there that length of time. And they're not dummies by any means. A lot of them are very well sussed out, very very clever ladies. And ... they're very definitely there because they want to be. I don't see them being abused ... It's not a thing I would smile on gladly if I did see it, because it seems to me that if we've got a good guy in the club, then he's a much better guy if he's got a good old lady standing by his side."

Nevertheless, women are excluded from membership of the Hells Angels, together with ninety-nine per cent of other outlaw motorcycle clubs worldwide. I asked Snake why this was:

"True, there aren't any women members, although there were women at the meeting when the first Hells Angels started up in 1947, but we've got no special rule against it. I would be amazed if one did come along who qualified, was good enough to prospect, but if she did, fair play to her. I can't see it ever happening though, and a lot of our guys would be dead set against

it if it did. That's the way things are ..."

Fagin:

"What part do women play in the Hells Angels? In the sense of belonging to the club, they don't. Maybe it's because hardly any women ride large capacity motorcycles. I don't know ...

"In general we've got a lot of members in our club who are actually involved with, and got a conventional family life ... There are old ladies. I mean, what we call a guy's wife or his steady girlfriend's an old lady, and I don't think it's a derogatory term at all. In fact, they're quite, very well respected. I mean our guys' old ladies we will trust with anything ... They're well respected amongst us. They kind of play a full part. They come off on runs. They're involved with the club in so far as they will accompany their guys to parties and whatever. But, having said that, they're not full members and they don't involve themselves, obviously, to the extent that we do. For me, it's the kind of relationship, amongst say our guys and our old ladies, the cross section of those relationships is probably just the same as you'd find anywhere else in society. And probably they're a lot closer ..."

Blue:

"Although I'm a Hells Angel, I'm a married man. I've got kids, my responsibilities are at home."

Doesn't that conflict in any way with your life as an Angel?

"It happens, I suppose. It's inevitable really, but generally we manage to muck along okay, don't we dear? As it happens, it works okay. Having a home of my own gives me a bit of stability. Before that I was always in some sort of trouble, some sort of scrape or something. But now I've settled down a

bit I suppose. That doesn't stop me doing my bit for the club though, not at all. I'm just as active with the club as I ever was. I couldn't give that up, even for my family, however important they are to me, I couldn't do that, no way. If my old lady said to me one day, 'Look I've had enough, I want you to pack it in,' or something like that, it'd put me on the line to make a decision. But she never would. She knows how strongly I feel about it and she doesn't make those sort of demands. If she did I'd get rid of her (laughter)."

In fact, despite Blue's affirmation that, if it ever came to the crunch, he would place his allegiance to the Angels before his wife and family, when he did have to make precisely that decision several months after the interview, he opted instead to terminate his membership in a last ditch attempt to repair his ailing marriage. And, notwithstanding protestations to the contrary, almost all Hells Angels who leave the club of their own volition, do so as a result of pressure exerted on them by their 'old ladies' to 'settle down'. In subcultural argot, such people are referred to somewhat derisively as 'doughnuts', an expression which, although in common parlance throughout the world, has no traceable derivation.

This is not to say that close bonds between a club member and his old lady are in any way discouraged or considered to be unacceptable in the eyes of his peers. On the contrary, most outlaw bikers have stable and long lasting relationships with their partners, extending to marriage in many cases, and marriage in the most conventional of circumstances at that. The myth of the 'Angel wedding', in which the happy couple are joined in matrimony with a Harley-Davidson workshop manual serving as a bible (divorce being conducted by a ritual tearing assunder of the book) and then doused in a mixture of urine, excretia and

other noxious substances, is nothing more than that, a myth. Such 'Angel weddings' are referred to in interviews with club members conducted in 1973 by Ir. Paul Willis in the course of the banned Southern Television documentary 'Hells Angels', but having since spoken to several of the participants, I am thoroughly satisfied that the Angels succeeded in playing an elaborate practical joke on the good doctor.

There is absolutely no evidence to suggest that such ceremonies exist amongst the Angels, or indeed ever existed, except in the minds of authors of pulp fiction. Again, the stories are legion and oft repeated in the tabloid press as factual accounts of the lifestyle of 'real Hells Angels', but in matrimonial matters the Angels, in common with other outlaw club members, behave no differently from the mass of the population, preferring instead to use the services of a registry office or, in some instances, a church.

In the United States, where the absence of an authorised state religion allows diverse sects to appoint their own legally ordained ministers to conduct weddings and funerals, the Hells Angels have formed and legally registered the Church of the Hells Angels which has formulated its own set of marriage vows which members may utilise if they so choose, although there is no obligation put upon them by the club to do so. They read as follows:

"Brothers and Sisters, we are partying here on this Hells Angels run to join together this man and this woman in an organic wedding, which is a marriage which fits our way of life, as you will see by its definition.

"An organic marriage is one between a man of a higher rank and a woman of a lesser rank, contracted with the stipulation

that neither the wife nor any female offspring of this marriage shall ever inherit or enjoy the rank, title or property of the husband -

"Into this life together each woman person will have to be joined to each man.

"Now (...), will you take this woman to be your wedded wife, to love and respect with the same honour as you have for each brother?

"(...), will you have this Hells Angel to be thy wedded husband, to live together in his life, honour him, obey him, polishing his bike, always dutifully devoting yourself to him, unquestioning his every move, put on your honour to be his as long as you both shall be?

"With these rings, I now organically marry you in the name of the Hells Angels United States of America."¹³⁹

There is however some considerable doubt amongst even the Angels as to whether such vows are intended to be taken seriously by the parties concerned, and it seems much more likely that they were simply contrived to add to the already highly pervasive sense of mystique surrounding club affairs, a mystique which is intentionally propagated and perpetuated by the Angels themselves. They take a huge and perverse delight in thinking that 'straight society' believes them to be antisocial barbarians at odds with normative standards of behaviour, especially when the eye of the movie camera is upon them, as was the case when the above 'marriage' ceremony was recorded. But, in private, they tend to tow the conventional line in matters of birth, death and marriage, reserving their much vaunted 'rituals' for public performance only. In any case, it is highly unlikely that the provisions of the Angels' marriage vows are even remotely legally binding on the parties under American law, and therefore any question of

a divorce or inheritance settlement arising as a consequence would presumably be dealt with by the courts in a routine straightforward fashion.

Still though, the central question remains: what is it that attracts women to the biker subculture? What motivates them to get involved with outlaw clubs and club members in the first place? And, furthermore, why do many of them stay involved for such long periods of time?

Jules, the punk poet, whose ex-husband was a member of the British outlaw club Satans Slaves, explains her attitude towards the club and her own role within it:

"It's like a tribal brotherhood ... You are part of an enormous family, much more close than your own family ever could be. Their brothers are their whole lives and to not help a brother is to violate a code. It's a very honourable thing. It's a lot to do with honour and pride and faith, and things which in normal society today are considered rather passe and old fashioned ... They build large beautiful motorcycles, rigs ... that people call choppers. They put their whole lives into them. They put ... every penny into them. They dedicate vast tracts of time to building them ... They're just beautiful. They're like moving sculptures ... They are the whole *raison d'etre*, everything is centred around these beautiful rigs. If you're a girl you get to polish them a lot (laughter) ...

"A woman can never be a Satans Slave or a Hells Angel, that would never happen. I mean a lot of feminists would throw their hats up and scream, and say 'Oh well this is terrible. This shouldn't happen.' But, I mean ... when I say that, one of the whole things about being a Satans Slave or an Angel really is that you're not really concerned with what other people think at

all ... What straight society thinks is of no interest whatsoever. So I mean that's out of the window for a start ...

"You are proud of your man. You're proud of his achievements. You help him as much as you can ... You're proud of his ability to build the big bikes, to ride them well, to handle himself in a fight, to protect you and your family. I never felt second class. I never felt anything like that ... Now I've come out into straight society I feel like (that) quite often ... I felt that I had my place and had a lot of worth ..."140

And, in a recent American television interview, a Hells Angel's old lady had the following words to say about her involvement with the club:

"I'll tell you what the Hells Angels don't do to us. They don't take us and put us in a mould and slam down the cover on us and open up the cover and pull us out and tell us that's the way that we're gonna be. They don't do that. What they do is straighten us out. They don't mould us like plastic you know, like some citizen does to his wife ...

"In seven years I've been slapped once and I asked for it. And I know just what it takes to get slapped for ... It depends how far you push a guy ... If I hadn't of deserved it then I wouldn't be here now ..."141

Nevertheless, the F.B.I. firmly believes that what it terms 'gang women' are little more than dupes recruited by club members to further their criminal enterprises. In their opinion, one of the major aids to the "understanding of gang behaviour is the role of women and their association with the gang." They maintain that:

"Although women are ususally not gang members, they perform an important function in many gang-related crimes. Inititally attracted because of the excitement gang life offers, many women are later held involuntarily or stay out of fear. They may be the 'property' of one member only or used by several gang members. The female role is that of a servant. Women are looked upon as objects to be used for sexual, criminal or personal purposes. The women who allow themselves to remain in this role seem to be the best characterized as inadequate personality types. They have relatively poor judgement, not because they do not care but because they are inept. Gang women feel guilty for failing to live up to the expectations of others: they are also less reactive to pressure than their male associates. They seem to internalize life's pressures rather than blaming others. Consequently, gang women are attracted to the dominant personalities of some gang members and are easily used by them. Because of fear and a relatively low level of self-esteem, and often simply because of no place to go, the gang 'old lady' or 'mama' feels unable to break away. Instead she develops a strong dependency. Not unlike some battered women, she may even accept responsibility for being abused and may feel guilty for not living up to a gang member's expectations." 142

And the R.C.M.P. go even farther, stating that:

"Sixty per-cent of the women are there because of fear. If they aren't dragged off the street in broad daylight and held as white slaves, they are told that if they leave, the gang will kill their parents ...

"Prostitution rackets with elements of white slavery are just one facet of women in bikerdom ... Some of these girls are abducted and then given drugs so that they become dependent

on the bikers for their daily fix ...

"Bikers of course exploit these females to the full. There are innumerable reported cases of bikers 'living off the avails' of females ... Strangely enough and despite the abuse these women receive, there is never a shortage. An unlimited number of good looking females, it seems, are attracted, not so much to the bikers themselves, but the macho image that they represent as well as the lifestyle and excitement within the sub-culture ...

"Police very often wonder what attracts beautiful young girls to such a lifestyle ... There is no stereotyped female who joins biker clubs. Every class and ethnic origin is represented ... Their misguided loyalty is often such as to sacrifice themselves for their 'old men' ... On the other side of the coin, however, many girls vanish into obscurity of anonymity, their fate has never been revealed, their minds burnt out by drugs, the victims of their own lifestyle; fast, easy and violent." 143

And, in an overtly criminal capacity, maintains the F.B.I., these 'gang women' have proved themselves to be "just as cold-hearted and deadly as the male members", wholly dictating their lives to the club that they follow and working on its behalf in various specialised areas.

"Quite often", they claim, "a capable 'old lady' has kept the old man's drug business running while he was in jail.

"Further, biker women frequently carry weapons for their men, cash mother's allowance cheques and get welfare, knowing that if they are caught, the court system will likely be more lenient than strict on a woman ...

"Once trusted, their role turns to intelligence. Many gangs have planted their women in official offices, courtrooms, licence bureaus, town halls and so on where they have access to birth certificate blanks, unfilled driving licence forms and other vital statistics documentation that are very helpful in changing the identities of fugitive bikers fleeing from the law. It is also a known fact that some gangs keep a card index system on local police and authorities, listing names, addresses, make of car and other foibles, intelligence systems which sometimes rival a police information centre as far as accuracy and up-to-dateness is concerned. Biker women employed in key strategic positions can be the biker intelligence source." 144

What these stirring accounts of criminal conspiracy signally fail to explain, however, is precisely how it is that such 'inept and inadequate personality types with relatively poor judgement, held against their will, their minds burned out by drugs' are able to compete for and secure such positions of responsibility and trust within government departments, let alone utilise them in so shrewd a manner in order to gather and collate intelligence and execute complex fraudulent dealings. And, if equipped with the intellectual capacity necessary to successfully carry out such skillful acts of subterfuge, how it is that they are so easily duped into surrendering their freedom and autonomy to become 'gang women', a lifestyle which appears to offer little in the way of status or material reward, and yet as the F.B.I. admit, seems to attract no shortage of willing recruits. Furthermore it appears strange that once inveigled into such an unpleasant position, the 'victim' is willing to run her husband's 'drug business' while he is in jail, rather than exploiting an obviously golden opportunity to evade his evil clutches. Let us look a little deeper into the role of

women in the biker subculture.

According to the celebrated Lynch Report, together with just about every other report, official or otherwise, on the activities of the Hells Angels and similar prominent outlaw motorcycle clubs since, biker women fall into one of three distinct categories: sheep, mamas and old ladies. Attorney General Lynch states with considerable conviction that each and every prospective member of the Hells Angels is required under club rules to take with him to his 'initiation ceremony' a compliant woman, or sheep, to be proffered as a sort of ritualistic sexual sacrifice to his peers. However, in common with other uninformed speculation regarding the content of such 'rituals', there is not a shred of truth in this. Nowhere have I been able to find reference to an actual eye-witness account of activities concerning sheep, and any suggestion that this practice exists, or indeed has ever existed, was ridiculed by the bikers I spoke to. The Angels themselves find it highly amusing to think that people could believe such bizarre stories, but are quite happy for people to believe whatever they like.

The R.C.M.P. Gazette describes sheep as "girls who for some reason or another, have joined the gang for the sake of thrills. They generally get more than they bargained for. The big come-on is 'come and have a ride on my bike', from where it is an easy step to 'visit the boys at the clubhouse'. What happens there is anybody's guess, but it's certainly not fun. What starts out to be an innocent 'ride' ends up as a free for all gang bang, or 'pulling a train' with every form of sexual abuse thrown in for good measure. It is a significant fact that¹⁴ about 90% of these abuses go unreported because of intimidation."

In this version, however, there is no mention of the

ritualistic role of sheep in the context of initiation ceremonies. The term is merely used to denote a woman who is abused by the 'gang' for the purposes of individual or group sexual gratification. It is somewhat ambiguous, in that casual acquaintances, least of all 'girls' are extremely unlikely to receive invitations to a clubhouse, less still be allowed to actually join the 'gang' concerned. Furthermore, if as the R.C.M.P. maintain, 'what happens there is anybody's guess', then by the same token, it is also 'anybody's guess' whether or not abuses occur, reported or unreported. A 'significant fact' based as it is on an uninformed guess is hardly a significant fact.

Nevertheless, this definition is much closer to what is generally understood by the term mama, meaning a woman who of her own volition attaches herself to an outlaw motorcycle club in order to provide services of a sexual nature to the membership, either singly or collectively. What motivates such women is really a question for psychology rather than sociology. It may be that they choose to attach themselves to the club in order to share in its social activities, runs, parties, etc., without the necessity to pair up with one particular biker, or they may be seeking the protection that the club offers, or then again, it may be simply that they enjoy group sexual activity. But, whatever the reason, mamas are highly respected and highly prized by the club concerned for their status value, and are looked after as long as they choose to tag along. Sometimes, mamas will form an attachment to one particular member of the club and will then 'graduate' to the status of an old lady, with no stigma resulting from her past activities. But, in most cases, mamas simply move on to pastures new, abandoning the biker subculture for other forms of excitement. In actual fact,

there is very little difference between bike club mamas and 'available women' who associate themselves with particular male groups in bourgeois society, with the important proviso that they would never be referred to as slags or sluts, and would never accept money in exchange for their favours. According to Thompson:

"The term 'mama' is all that remains of the original expression 'Let's go make somebody a mama', which was later shortened to 'Let's go make a mama'. Other fraternities have different ways of saying it, but the meaning is the same - a girl who's always available ...

"There are mamas at any Angel gathering, large or small. They travel as part of the troupe ... fully understanding what's expected: they are available at any time, in any way, to any Angel, friend or favoured guest - individually or otherwise. They also understand that the minute they don't like the arrangement they can leave. Most hang around for a few months, then drift on to something else. A few have been around for years ...

"The mamas aren't pretty, although some of the newer and younger ones have a sort of demented beauty that erodes so fast that you have to see it happen, over a period of months, to feel any sense of tragedy. Once the girls have developed the proper perspective, it's easy to take them for granted ... Their conversation ranges from gossip and raw innuendo, to fending off jibes and haggling over small amounts of money. But every now and then one of them will rap off something eloquent. Donna, a stocky, good-natured brunette who came north with the exodus from Berdoo, once put the whole thing in a nut. 'Everybody believes in something,' she said. 'Some people believe in God. I believe in the Angels.'"¹⁴⁶

Thompson is, in my view, far too dismissive of the position of mamas vis-a-vis the outlaw motorcycle club. Whilst it may certainly be true to say that they are, as a breed, taken for granted and routinely used for sexual gratification by one and all, they're relationship towards the male membership is of a considerably more symbiotic nature than at first appears. Very probably, from a bourgeois point of view, that relationship is morally questionable, but the typical mama, where she still exists, would undoubtedly vociferously defend herself if so attacked. Far from being the pathetic dupe of her wicked captors, to be abused as long as it suits their evil purposes, such women are often every bit as wild and aggressive as the male members of their chosen club, and sometimes more so. Shrinking violets they definitely are not, and indeed, on occasions, will resort to physical violence in order to prove not only their personal worth, but also their loyalty to the club. In that respect, biker mamas are akin to the military camp-followers or navy women of yore, who would follow the company from place to place, preferring a precarious and often dangerous existence to the alternative lifestyle that society has to offer the average working class female, that of house-tied wife and mother.

Mamas scornfully dismiss club old ladies for being 'soft', and for their dependence on their male partner for their status within the club. And they, in return, are universally loathed by the old ladies, who regard their amoral behaviour with unconcealed contempt. Inevitably, this is a source of much friction within the group, causing the departure, sooner or later, of the mama concerned. Nonetheless, if a mama does establish a relationship with a particular club member and becomes his old lady, she is almost universally accepted by the other old ladies as an equal, past conflicts notwithstanding.

Rightly or wrongly, mamas regard themselves as being associated with the group through their own endeavours, however that right of acceptance is negotiated and maintained. In their eyes, they have a superior status within the subcultural group as a whole to that of the old ladies, for whom group access is entirely dependent upon their emotional relationship with a member. And, in the sense that their role is much more central to club life, they may well have a point, although not one that many feminists would care to defend. Many mamas ride their own bikes, in contrast to the majority of old ladies whose relationship towards the nuts and bolts side of the subculture is much more vicarious. They pride themselves on their riding skills, travelling from place to place under their own steam, disdaining offers of pillion transport. Such women would almost certainly form the nucleus of female outlaw clubs were the prevailing subcultural climate more accommodating.

Today, mamas are a rare commodity in the motorcycle subculture. The Kent Hells Angels have not had a club mama for more than ten years, and have no desire to rekindle the tradition. It would appear to be the case that even outlaw motorcycle clubs, bastions as they are of principles of male chauvinism, have felt the impact of the feminist movement over the past decade. Mamas, along with the various forms of wings ritual in which they played a vital part, have virtually disappeared from the scene and look unlikely to reappear in the future. In Britain and the rest of Europe, the term mama has all but vanished from the biker vocabulary, and in the United States, where the term 'motorcycle mama' is still in current usage, its meaning has changed radically, and it is now used to describe, in a most respectful way, women who build and ride their own custom motorcycles.

Apart from the influence that broader ideological shifts

may or may not have had upon attitudes and behaviour towards women within the biker subculture, a change in the balance of internal social forces has also contributed significantly to the decline in the practice of recruiting club mamas. Firstly, and most importantly, as the subculture has matured over the past forty years and become intergenerational in composition, long term pair-bonding relationships have increasingly come to be formed within the various club substructures. Members and their old ladies have got married, had children, and settled down into relatively conventional patterns of family life, albeit family life compromised by its relationship to the overarching social nexus of the club. These long-term involvements have tended to disincline the male partner from participating in forms of activity which might 'rock the boat' as far as their spouses are concerned. Very few old ladies would be likely to gaze with approval upon a husband consorting with a club mama, less still one who brought a social disease home with him as a result. Mamas may well be an indispensable part of the outlaw folklore, but for many it is a part that is best relegated to the dustbin of history.

An additional contributory factor to the decline in such sexual rites de passage is the broadening over time of the club's social nexus to accommodate members' wives and families. The old ladies have taken on a collective identity and with it a collective consciousness, which has engendered a solidarity within their ranks which acts as a very effective pressure group in the face of external threats posed to one and all, the admission of a mama to the group being a prime example. And, whilst the majority of outlaw club members would be loath to admit it, even to each other, there are some things that are best forgotten in order to keep the peace.

A further reason for the current non-acceptance of mamas into many outlaw clubs is concerned with the quest for increased security in the face of determined efforts by the police and various federal/governmental agencies to infiltrate the cloak of secrecy which surrounds their activities, criminal or otherwise. This fear of infiltration, in some cases a proven fear, discourages the involvement of outsiders in the social life of the club, outsiders whose credentials cannot be verified beyond reasonable doubt. As mamas neither have to undergo the lengthy and rigorous period of prospectship which, in the eyes of the club, eliminates all full-patch members as potential 'security risks', nor have a respected brother to vouch for their integrity, as do the old ladies, they are looked upon as an unnecessary encumbrance which could bring about everybody's downfall.

This is not an entirely irrational paranoia on the part of the bikers as, apart from actual instances of police infiltration, anybody who is less than wholly dedicated to the club might, if slighted or abused, decide to get their revenge by acting as a police informer. In fact, both the Canadian and American federal authorities readily admit that disgruntled biker women are often a useful source of inside information on biker activities.

"Police," say the Canadian Biker Intelligence Unit, "should never underestimate a biker woman's effectiveness within the club. Sometimes, a biker woman caught at the right moment, will reveal more about club structures and political in-fighting than the well trained biker investigator could ever hope to obtain on his own. If a woman has just freshly been beaten she could become a veritable gold mine of information."¹⁴⁷

And the F.B.I., "often find gang women most helpful with

with information when their association with gang members weakens and loyalties shift. Unfortunately," they add, "information received then is often outdated."¹⁴⁸

As much of the F.B.I. information on outlaw motorcycle clubs is hopelessly outdated, not to say entirely fictional in content, one wonders whether in fact such sources of information might not be beneficial to the bikers. Nevertheless, most outlaw clubs are wary of security leaks and do everything possible to prevent them.

Also, mamas, in common with other friends and associates are not subject to club codes of conduct and discipline, and can therefore be sources of trouble for the group in different ways. A hitherto willing mama might decide to cry rape if the pressure becomes more than she can handle, thereby involving club members in a court case which not only serves to threaten the curtailment of their own individual liberty, but also 'brings down the heat' on the club in general. Such actions, even those which result in acquittals, cause many problems for the club concerned, the implication being that the entire membership, whether involved in the 'incident' or not, are somehow guilty of acts of sexual abuse and should be publicly condemned. Sex cases involving outlaw motorcycle club members invariably hit the headlines, making it extremely difficult for anybody sporting that particular club's back patch to obtain a drink, rent accommodation, or get a fair hearing in front of a jury in any subsequent court case. Therefore, steps are taken to minimise that risk via the exclusion of anybody, mamas included, from anything more than superficial involvement in club activities, and the majority of outlaw clubs would definitely not allow anything to take place on club premises which might invite prosecution.

A final, but nevertheless important contributory factor is that those women who, for one reason or another, might have in the past involved themselves with clubs in that capacity have, as the subculture has proliferated, discovered alternative avenues for personal advancement within its ranks. Broader-based groups, such as the National Chopper Club (N.C.C.), the Motorcycle Action Group (M.A.G.) and various other national and local motorcycling organisations have sprung up, catering for the needs of those bikers, male or female, who want to get in on the action, but are either unwilling or unable to invest the high level of commitment necessary to fulfill the exacting membership requirements of an outlaw club. In these clubs, a bike riding woman can get involved on an equal basis with her male counterparts, attending runs, rallies, custom shows and other functions as a full club member, with all the rights and privileges accruing to that membership within the wider subculture. In the case of M.A.G., women occupy many of the positions of power, up to and including the vice-presidency. And, the potential for female participation in subcultural activities in general has increased substantially as the biker lifestyle has burgeoned.

But, if mamas have undergone an absolute decline in recent years, the third category of women generally associated with the biker subculture, old ladies, display no such tendency. According to Thompson:

"Old ladies (should) not be confused, except at serious risk, with 'mamas' or 'strange chicks'. An old lady can be a steady girlfriend, a wife or even some bawdy hustler that one of the outlaws has taken a liking to. Whatever the connection, she is presumed to be spoken for, and unless she makes obvious signs to the contrary, she will usually be left alone. The

Angels (and presumably other American outlaw clubs of that era) are very solemn about this, insisting that no member would think of violating the sanctity of another's liaison. This is true, but only up to a point. Unlike wolves, old ladies don't mate for life, and sometimes not even for a month. Many are legally married with several children, and exist entirely apart from the general promiscuity. Others are borderline cases who simply change their minds now and then ... They switch loyalties without losing rank, establishing just as firm a relationship with one Angel as the previously had with another.

"... An old lady who changes her mind once too often, or perhaps only once, will find herself reclassified as a mama, which means she is common property."¹⁴⁹

Basically, with certain provisos, Thompson's definition still holds true today. An outlaw biker's old lady is strictly a one man woman, and none of his fellow club members would, openly at least, presume to violate the sanctity of that liaison. The merest hint of any transgression of this unwritten rule is deemed to be not only a personal affront to the aggrieved party, but perhaps more importantly, a very severe breach of the mutual trust which underpins group solidarity. And, whilst the offender cannot actually be penalised or expelled from the club, he will be socially ostracised to the point where, sooner or later, he will be pressurised into resigning of his own volition. To interfere with or abuse somebody else's old lady shows a serious lack of respect for the brotherhood, a lack of respect which cannot be tolerated if the club is to survive as a workable unit.

Likewise, an old lady is not expected to step out of line with a club member, and any such behaviour on her part invariably

provokes an antagonistic group reaction to the effect that the aggrieved partner is forced to terminate their relationship. Either that, or both of them are stigmatised to such an extent that he will eventually take his leave.

Infractions of this taboo occur only rarely and, when they do are unlikely to result in physical conflict. Rather, group sanctions imposed against the transgressor are considered sufficient to tackle the problem. Outlaw club members are disinclined to fight with fellow members 'over a woman', and perhaps more importantly, collective retribution acts to reaffirm feelings of group loyalty and solidarity which may have been threatened by the 'offence'.

However, I cannot agree with Thompson's assertion that an old lady can be any woman to whom an outlaw has merely taken a passing fancy. Whilst it is certainly true that unattached club members do have casual relationships with women, sometimes several at the same time, the women concerned would in no way be regarded, by either the individual or the group, as old ladies. The title old lady is only conferred upon those women who have entered into a steady relationship with a member and, as such, a steady relationship with the group. This has much more to do with the innate reluctance of the club to admit anybody to its ranks who has not first proved their allegiance and reliability, rather than any moral attitude towards the women concerned. Outsiders are outsiders and, as such, are universally treated with suspicion until such time that they are seen by one and all to be worthy of peer group acceptance. Because casual girlfriends are not considered to be seriously committed to the club, albeit through the patronage of a male member, they remain, along with the rest of the non-initiated population, suspect, and accordingly denied access to the inner

sanctum of the club.

There are no formal criteria by which a potential old lady gains acceptance, in the way that a male prospect might progress by stages to the status of a full member. Rather, the female partner of an Angel who aspires to the position of an old lady is required to undergo a period of informal acclimatisation of indeterminate duration, until such time that she 'makes the grade'. She is expected to accompany her partner to various formal and informal social functions, runs, parties, anniversaries, etc., as well as get acquainted with the other old ladies, whose approval or disapproval has a major part to play in the process of status graduation. It may take several months before acceptance is achieved, during which time she will be treated with cautious respect, in accordance with her partner's status as a brother Angel. However, no matter what the personal standing of her partner within the club hierarchy, whether he be a long serving and much respected member, president even, or a relatively new recruit, it will make absolutely no difference to her acceptance or non-acceptance, nor will it serve to accelerate the process of group recognition.

Some women are unable to attain the degree of respect from the group necessary to confer upon them the status of old lady, and pressure will be exerted on their male partners to ditch them. In practice, however, this rarely occurs, as the majority of candidates very quickly make up their minds whether or not they desire to commit themselves to the strictures placed upon their relationship by the tightly knit social nexus of the club. Those that decide against it usually leave of their own volition, whilst those that decide to go ahead take positive steps to accommodate themselves within the established patterns of behaviour appropriate to the group.

Unlike mamas, for whom the attraction towards involvement with the group is diffuse, old ladies tend, in the main, to view routine club activities as something which must be born with good grace if they are to maintain a stable relationship with their partner. Once having gained acceptance, some consciously distance themselves from day to day club life, preferring to leave that side of things to their male partner, but others are very much more active in their involvement, spending large amounts of their time at the clubhouse or out and about with club members or other old ladies. Groups of old ladies often go out to the pub together or go and visit other old ladies from fraternal chapters, socialising with them on a regular basis. In this manner, the bonds of solidarity which permeate the group as a whole are considerably strengthened.

In both cases, however, the old lady's primary loyalty is to her partner rather than to the club and, if he ceases to be a member, then she will also leave the group. Only in an extremely small minority of cases do old ladies switch loyalties from one club member to another and, in such cases, her former partner will usually transfer to another chapter in order to minimise the risk of internal friction being generated.

Despite repeated reports to the contrary, I could find no evidence to support the contention that the members of outlaw motorcycle clubs are engaged in holding old ladies against their will in the pursuit of nefarious purposes of their own, whether through threats of or actual physical violence, or through the use of addictive drugs. On the contrary, by far the majority of outlaw bikers and their old ladies enjoy almost boringly conventional relationships. More than fifty per cent of the Kent Angels are married, and have been for several years. Some have

young families and, apart from the fact that they wear Hells Angels colours on their backs and ride motorcycles, live no differently from the rest of their suburban neighbours.

Many members met and set up home with their old ladies before they decided to prospect for club membership, and whilst in some cases their new found role initially put a strain on their relationship, their pattern of domestic life appears to have adjusted over time in order to accommodate club commitments without conflict. In fact, the Kent old ladies would be highly insulted were it to be brought to their attention that they were routinely depicted in the media as mindless, inadequate, drug-ridden drudges. They would argue that they enjoy a much better lifestyle than the vast majority of wives, going off on weekend runs, attending club parties, custom shows and other biker related events, apart from having a strongly supportive network of people to fall back on in times of trouble. As a group, the Angels' old ladies are smart, intelligent and outspoken. Almost all of them hold down full-time jobs, several have professional qualifications and commute daily to well paid employment in London and all, to a woman, would consider themselves to be nothing less than wholly respectable. So much so, that they have been known to go to court on more than one occasion in order to defend their reputations against defamatory newspaper allegations.

In May 1982, following the publication of an article in Playboy Magazine entitled 'Undercover Angel', in the course of which it was alleged that an Angel bride had been forced to 'pull a train' (engage in group sex) with her new husband's fellow club members who were 'waiting their turn', four old ladies from the Oakland and Richmond, California chapters of the Hells Angels sued publisher High Hefner in a \$24 million dollar libel suit for having exposed the plaintiffs to "hatred, contempt,

ridicule and obloquy", and causing them to be "shunned and avoided by friends and family".¹⁵⁰ The suit claimed that the Playboy article had "grossly defamed all wives of members of the Oakland and Richmond chapters" and had injured their reputation, causing them to "suffer shame, humiliation, disgrace, insulted honour, mortification, mental anxiety and indignation."¹⁵¹

One of the plaintiffs, Oakland president Sonny Barger's wife Sharon, told the court: "We're spoiled rotten ... We're not big pushers of women's lib, but we aren't about to be insulted like that by anybody ...

"Me and Sonny married last year after finally convincing my parents that an Angel would make a first-rate husband, and the Playboy article has only renewed tension with my parents.

"I've got two young boys and I don't want them reading this, about us partaking in things that simply don't go on ..." ¹⁵²

It is however certainly true to say that the role of old ladies within the organisational structure of the typical outlaw motorcycle club is a subordinate one. They have no say in the day to day decision making process, are barred from meetings and are not allowed access to club property, other than that which is expressly permitted to them by their partner. Their home lives may be severely disrupted by their partners' club commitments which more often than not take precedence over domestic matters, and the comings and goings of fellow club members with mouths to feed and less than cleanly habits, at varying hours of the day and night, is an inconvenience that few women would be prepared to put up with. But, having said that, judging by the longevity of such relationships and the apparent abundance of female applicants ready and willing to take over the job, the life of a biker's old lady surely can't be as black

as it is painted by those not in the know.

Stories of sexual and physical abuse abound, but the group of old ladies that I spoke to seemed both happy and healthy, and generally contented with their lot in life, which they are quick to defend if attacked. In the sixties and early seventies, relationships between club members and their old ladies were on a much more casual footing, women being content to hang around the club for as long as it suited either their or their partner's purposes. They would often switch allegiance from one member to another with no recriminations, or move on as the mood took them. In the case of the Hells Angels, any old lady that was in evidence for a period of six months or longer was entitled to wear a property patch - a small round patch sewn on the front of a denim cut-off bearing the words 'Property Of ... Hells Angels Kent'. The property patch served to warn members from other chapters that the woman in question was already 'spoken for' and that a 'hands off' policy must operate towards her. The property patch also distinguished the wearer from mamas and other transient female camp-followers, whose status in the eyes of the group was somewhat less. It was therefore, despite the subordinate nature of the message, deemed a considerable honour to be accorded the right to wear a property patch, and not at all insulting to the person concerned.

Some outlaw clubs have, in the past, gone so far as to employ property patches the size of a full set of colours made up to be worn on the backs of their old ladies' cut-offs, but this practice, along with the Angels more discreet version of the property patch has, with the exception of a very few minor American clubs, altogether disappeared, and is today almost universally regarded as passe amongst the subculture as a whole. Even when the property patch was in vogue with outlaw clubs, it is unlikely

that it was taken seriously, and it should rather be classified alongside the wearing of wings, swastikas, Nazi helmets and other 'offensive' regalia as yet another attempt to 'show class' by 'blowing the minds of the citizens'.

Another once popular biker custom was to adorn non-visible parts of old ladies' anatomy with tattoos bearing the 'property of (...)' legend. Today, this practice has also virtually disappeared amongst hardcore outlaw clubs, partly because the women concerned took exception to the practice and partly because those so adorned carried with them a permanent reminder of a former boyfriend if and when that particular relationship came to an end. It is now generally restricted to those who aspire to the outlaw way of life, but for some reason or other fail to make the grade. In fact, I find it exceedingly difficult to imagine that any of the Hells Angels' old ladies with whom I spoke would allow themselves to be referred to as the property of anybody, let alone have it tattooed on their bodies or, perhaps worse, emblazoned on their clothing for all the world to see.

At the Kent Show, I spoke to Jan and Susie, both bikers' old ladies and both contestants in the euphemistically named 'Wet T-shirt Contest', about their attitudes to sexism within the biker subculture -

Jan, you won the competition. What did you get for winning?

Jan:

"Well, you get a trophy and five pounds cash."

Is it worth it?

Jan:

"Well it was good fun at the time. Yeah (laughter)".

Isn't it rather strange going in for competitions to compare the size of your breasts with somebody else's?

Jan:

"Well it's my boyfriend that encourages me really. Yeah (laughter) ... I wouldn't bother if it wasn't for him ... He's always saying 'Oh go on, go on' ... I've been in for two before, but it's really only sort of once a year or something ... It's different. If you were on a beach or something, people wouldn't take any notice, but it's different when you're on a stage."

A lot of people would say, listening to the baying hoards of guys, that you're being treated like sex objects.

Jan:

"Well, I suppose so ... It's like why do people buy the Sun for page three (laughter)"

Do you think that?

Susie:

"Well yes, I did at one point and I thought hey this isn't fair, why don't we have a man's competition. So I suggested it. So the guy that was doing the compering took his things off."

Overall, don't you think that bikers do tend to treat women like second class citizens?

Susie:

"I think they're pretty stupid yeah".

Jan:

"I think some do. I mean my boyfriend doesn't treat me like a second class citizen. We've got the same sort of respect for each other".

None of the clubs here though would allow women to join ...

Jan:

"I wouldn't particularly want to join a club ... I go out with my boyfriend not because he's in a club, but for his own personality."

Do you think that there should be women only clubs?

Jan:

"It wouldn't worry me at all. I wouldn't join a ladies only club."

Would you join a ladies only club?

Susie:

"Me? If I could ride a bike then I'd want to be able to join. I'd be really furious if I couldn't ... If I've got a bike I should join a club, yeah. And if I was refused to be a Hells Angel I'd be the first woman one and I'd make a change. I wouldn't have these differences. I'd be really angry ... When I get my machine going I'm going to put myself up to be a Hells Angel."

What about forming your own club?

Susie:

"Yes probably".

You wouldn't join her club?

Jan:

"No (laughter) ... I'm quite happy as I am ...

Somebody was telling me that they'd recently seen something in a newspaper about somebody selling his old lady for ten cigarettes.

Jan:

"Oh God". (laughter)

How would you like to be sold for ten cigarettes?

Jan:

"Certainly not. No (laughter)."

Susie:

"You're right what you said about that sort of competition treating women as sex objects. I agree with that ... Some of the people I was with didn't like that, didn't like the idea of that ... Consequently I felt bad about taking part ... thinking about it afterwards."

You wouldn't do it again?

Susie:

"I would if I had bigger ones (laughter)".

The prize being five quid, it didn't even seem worth it ...

Susie:

"Oh yeah, it really did to me. I'd have really appreciated it ... It would have been my lunch (laughter) ... I'm really annoyed I didn't win ... It's my fault, my boobs aren't big enough ...".

Do you not think that the status of women is different if they ride their own bikes?

Susie:

"No ... I do own my own bike. It's in bits at the moment."

Is your boyfriend in one of the clubs here?

Susie:

"Yeah ... He's in a Brighton club a branch which is

growing ...".

What do you think of the club/biker lifestyle thing? What attracts you to it?

Susie:

"It's hard to say really ... It's just like people you bind together with. Actually, custom bikes are really uncomfortable. I prefer four wheels most of the time. That's the truth (laughter) ...".

Have you got something in common with all the people here?

Susie:

"Yes, I suppose so ... There seems to be a great affinity doesn't there? A great friendliness ... I don't really know too many Hells Angels, but the ones I do happen to meet seem awfully gentle. I can't understand what all the fuss is about".

Have you got a bike? Do you ride one?

Jan:

"No I don't. Not at all".

How did you get down here then? With your boyfriend?

Jan:

"Boyfriend".

Is he in one of the clubs?

Jan:

"Yeah. He belongs to the Kent Angels, the show organisers ..

Is there any particular reason why the whole lifestyle appeals to you?

Jan:

"No, not really. I met him when I was fourteen, and then

the lifestyle appealed to me ... That was seven years ago and we're still going strong. But I don't go out with him now for the lifestyle at all ... Spending weekends in fields doesn't appeal to me a great deal ... I'd rather stay in a Greek hotel or something (laughter) ... But I go because he enjoys it".

What was it that appealed to you when you were fourteen?

Jan:

"Well then it was just the sort of thing to do ... To go out on the back of a bike tearing down the motorway. It was great fun then ... But now I prefer to drive my own car (laughter)".

I saw a woman today getting her cleavage tattooed. You've not gone that far yet?

Jan:

"No. I don't like tattoos on women personally. I don't like them at all. I wouldn't have one certainly. Not even a little flower or anything."

You wouldn't go off and get tattooed?

Susie:

"No, probably not. I haven't got the courage ..."

There are of course many women who actively identify themselves with being members of the motorcycle subculture, for whom the role of a mama or an old lady would be out of the question, not because they eschew male company, but because they choose not to rely on anybody other than themselves to provide rite of access. They ride, and sometimes build their own machines and regard themselves as eminently worthy of upholding the biker tradition in their own right. Some of them are club members,

others choose to remain unaligned, but together they represent an increasingly large and increasingly important sector of the subculture. It is these women to whom I now intend to turn my attention.

Whilst, on the whole, female bikers tend to take to the road singly or in the shadow of male dominated groups, there are motorcycling organisations which cater solely for women. These range from touring orientated clubs like the ultra-respectable Women's International Motorcycle Association (W.I.M.A.) founded in 1950 "to promote international understanding and cooperation and to provide a platform for women to get together to share experiences, problems and ideas and to encourage their involvement in competitions", through to hardcore patch-wearing female outlaw clubs such as the New York based Sandman Ladies, with a membership to whom the description 'gentler sex' could never be applied.

In the United States, clubs like the Desert Laisies and the Motor Maids have been in existence since the late 1940s, catering initially for women motorcycle racers who, debarred from competition by the A.M.A. on the grounds of their sex, decided to pit their riding skills against each other instead. However, once they had got together and proved their ability to organise off-road events without the assistance of men, they very soon expanded their field of operations to include runs and other social activities, attracting to their ranks many other non-sporting women riders.

Today, the Motor Maids, the oldest established and by far the best known of the national all-women motorcycle clubs, has chapters in virtually every state throughout the United States and several in Canada. Their members, who as a rule ride immaculately turned out large-capacity Harley-Davidson Electra Glides,

regularly squash lacquered hair beneath monogrammed helmets, don jackets embroidered with their club insignia, and take to the roads husbandless to travel on mass runs, sometimes hundreds of miles long, to motorcycle gatherings up and down the country. They have become part of the folklore of motorcycling and can be seen riding in formation to the major biker festivals, where they are accepted as an integral part of the scene.

In Europe, the W.I.M.A. occupies a relatively similar sub-cultural position, though they tend not to mix so much as their American counterparts, preferring instead to organise their own runs and rallies, where they can enjoy each other's company without being overshadowed by hordes of male bikers. Their membership varies widely, cutting across the social classes to encompass all women from conservative grandmothers to tearaway teenagers, yet in no way do they label themselves as feminists. Rather, they are women from widely differing backgrounds who have one abiding passion in common, and that is the ownership and riding of motorcycles without having to depend on men for access to their chosen form of recreation. One prominent W.I.M.A. member, Kiri Garbutt, is a 43 year old grandmother, deputy head of a school for maladjusted teenage girls, and a dedicated biker. She says:

"If I don't have a bike I feel handicapped - as if my legs have been cut off. I get an ache, I stare at bikes passing outside the window ...

"The school governors are a bit unhappy about the bikes - it's not quite the image for a deputy head. Some girls have boyfriends with bikes, and I use mine as a privilege for them. If they're very good I might let them dust one. I'd love to get hold of a couple of smaller bikes and teach them basic riding and mechanics.

"People recognise that I'm a serious biker - I ride machines that have nothing to prove. They speak for themselves. And it's been a long time - when I was a girl I had to shut up and listen, so now I know a lot. I'm proud too. I'm sensitive about my image. Your bike is an extension of your personality, and I don't have small bike personality. In the same way I dress like a woman on a bike because that's what I am. I get salacious remarks, women always do, in all quarters, but it's all good humoured. It does annoy me when people say 'how do you keep that thing up?' I keep it up between my knees, like anyone else. I'm five foot and a bit, I've never dropped a bike through being too small, and if there's something I want to ride my legs grow - I can always reach the ground" 153

Membership of the W.I.M.A., which also has a handful of branches in Australasia and South Africa, is open to 'any woman who is interested in motorcycles whether she rides herself or as a pillion passenger', and the majority of women drawn into it have either husbands or boyfriends who are keen motorcyclists themselves. It is predominately a social/rally type club which requires no more than the payment of an annual subscription fee to join and makes no formal demands upon its members, barring the fact that they are female in gender. The organisation has no overt political stance, and although it undoubtedly does have a fair sprinkling of avowed feminists in its ranks, its predominant role is simply one of encouraging women on to two-wheeled transport and sustaining their interest in the face of the male domination of motorcycling as a subcultural activity. To that extent, the W.I.M.A. has been a resounding success and today boasts a membership of over two thousand worldwide. It has encouraged many formerly passive pillion riders to get off the back of their boyfriends' bikes and have a go for themselves, and whilst many of these converts eventually leave the organisation,

they continue to ride the road in their own right, actively propagating the cause of women on motorcycles. What the W.I.M.A. offers above all is a sympathetic atmosphere within which women are able to acclimatise themselves to the idea that they too can handle the power of a large-capacity motorcycle without being considered in any way strange by their peers, male or female.

As far as I was able to discover, there are no formal feminist motorcycle clubs in existence catering for women motorcyclists with a political bent, although there are a number of loose knit groups in the United States, Canada and Great Britain organised specifically with feminists in mind. One of the largest and most long lived of these is in Cardiff, where twenty or so women, mainly ex-university students, have formed a Spare Rib collective aimed at uniting feminists who are also, although not exclusively, motorcyclists. The Cardiff Women's Motorcycle Collective has been in existence for around seven years and has encouraged/spawned several other such groups throughout Britain. These collectives serve not only to promote and sustain an interest in motorcycling amongst their members, but also hold training sessions for teenage girls wishing to learn how to maintain their own machines. Janet Wright, one of the founders of C.W.M.C., explains the reasons why she got involved with motorcycling:

"When I started to ride a bike I began to realise for the first time that there was one aspect of my life that I could, at last, control myself.

"Allowing for petrol and repayment of the loan (borrowed to purchase her bike), I was saving so much on fares and time that I could do things that I hadn't been able to before. And get to places I couldn't get to previously. No longer dependent on people, or having to worry about last trains or buses, I could go everywhere in my own time. I don't know if I can explain

just how liberating having a bike was and is for me. I was feeling so helpless and suddenly there was something I could do.

"Apart from the practical advantages of being mobile there is the sheer pleasure of riding. However angry or low I feel when I start the bike, my tensions dissolve as soon as I move ... And I've discovered that the camaraderie that exists among motorcyclists isn't a myth because bikers really do stop and help each other.

"I was baffled once when I heard a woman complain that motorbikes were 'macho'. In my view a motorbike is the ideal form of transport for a feminist - assertive but not aggressive, agile and clever enough to get through where the big heavies (four-wheeled vehicles) can't. It's Independence on two wheels! The machine has no sex-related characteristics. Should we ignore an excellent form of transport because other people associate it with Hell's Angels and Greasers (with that image lovingly fostered by bike magazines)? Aggressive men will strut through their tough-guy rituals whether they have bikes or not."¹⁵⁴

In Hampstead, North London, the G.L.C. funded Women's Arts Alliance has set up a centre catering specifically for feminist bikers. Their motorcycle maintenance class is regularly packed with women anxious to get to grips with the hitherto exclusively male preserve of nuts, bolts and gaskets. The huge and unexpected demand for such courses has exceeded the organisers' wildest expectations, and the waiting list for admission is months long. They reckon to be able to turn out competent mechanics who can more than hold their own against men, but stress that they're in no way out to compete on the same ground as male bikers. Said Lucy, a spokeswoman for the Alliance:

"We're not into the speed stakes ... I have a lot of prin-

ciples tied up in my Honda 50. It would be capitulation to get a more powerful machine ... (We) don't want to compete, we are trying to break the male myth about the bigger the bike the bigger the man."

Added her friend Clare:

"We are up against the male stud thing. When we go into a shop about a repair they won't treat us seriously ..." 155

The W.A.A. also provides a base for women photographers and cutting facilities for film makers. It offers a meeting place to AFFIRM, a campaign against sexual images of women in the media, especially advertising - "Motorbike magazines are the worst offenders - there's a nude or semi-nude on every other page" - and the campaign has been taken up by the women in the motorcycling collective in an attempt to pressurise local dealerships into recognising their own bias against women riders.

The North London women are however primarily concerned with providing a sympathetic base where local and commuter riders with small capacity bikes and mopeds can be taught self-sufficiency in all matters motorcycling. Unlike the W.I.M.A. and the American Motor Maids, they are largely uninterested in promoting the cause of women bikers in the wider community, nor do they seek to establish an identity as a women's bike club in the sense of laying down formal requirements for membership and getting involved in the organisation of runs, rallies, custom shows and other subcultural activities. Thus, their influence on the attitudes and behaviour of the broader motorcycle subculture remains limited.

As far as the outlaw end of the spectrum is concerned, female bikers have made little or no significant impact. I was

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only able to trace one hardcore motorcycle club who freely admit women members, and that is the New Zealand based Highway 61 M.C., although there is evidence that the ranks of some Swedish and German outlaw clubs include female patch-holders. The Auckland chapter of Highway 51 even boasts a woman president, Jenny Bates, who has become notorious in the local press as a result of her repeated run-ins with the police, who seem to find the sight of her aboard her chopped Harley-Davidson an irresistible target for a roadside stop. But Jenny, however active and well publicised her participation may be, is only one of a very few female bikers who have made it to the top in the almost ubiquitously male dominated world of the outlaw.

In the United States, where patch wearing is a far more common sight amongst touring and rally type clubs, as well as the aptly named H.O.G. Riders (Harley Owners Group), it is not at all unusual to see women alongside men in a pack of custom bikers out on a run, but if the rockers on the back read Hells Angels, Outlaws, Bandidos, or one of the many other long established one-percenter clubs, then any accompanying women will almost always be relegated to a passive position on the pillion.

There is a popular and oft repeated legend amongst the American outlaw fraternity to the effect that, in the late 1960s, the Oakland chapter of the Hells Angels had a female prospect rejoicing in the name of Miss Death, who could outride, outfight, outdrink and altogether outclass many full-patch male members. Her favourite trick was to taunt the Highway Patrol, for whom the Angels are a perennial and overpowering focus of attention, by performing spectacular highspeed death defying stunts aboard her blood-red chopper. So high was her standing in the biker community that she was generally considered to be 'one of the boys' and, as such, a fitting candidate for club

membership. However, one day, or so the story goes, while she was being chased by a pair of police cruisers, she ran full tilt into a roadblock and met an untimely demise. It is said that she went over the top in order to prove her worth to the club, but there is not a shred of documentary evidence to verify that she ever existed, let alone made the grade as an Angel prospect. Whether the legend of Miss Leath is true or simply one of the many myths which surround the Hells Angels is a matter of pure speculation, but suffice to say that Miss Leath, real or imagined, was the first and last female contender for the deaths head patch and, as such, will forever occupy a hallowed place in subcultural folklore.

The fact is however that there is a handful of all-female outlaw clubs in the United States who take an immense pride in competing on a level with their male counterparts. These clubs, with names like Scooter Vamps, Sandman Ladies, Black Bitches, Crazy Homicide Sisters, Dragons, Immortals, Mau Mau Girls, Nomad Girls, Roman Queens, Scarlet Sisters, Twisted Sisters, etc., etc. ride large capacity custom motorcycles, wear full sets of colours, leather and denim, and all the subcultural paraphernalia associated with hardcore outlaw bikers. They have regular meetings, club rules, and laid down procedures for admission, including hangaround and prospect periods. Sometimes, they are allied to a male outlaw club, like the Sandman Ladies or the Crazy Homicide Sisters, in which case their organisational structures mirror those of their male counterparts, but more often they run alone, operating in the same way as any other outlaw club, participating fully in runs and other biker activities. So much so that, although very much in the minority, they have come to be widely accepted as a normative part of the subculture.

The Sandman Ladies are a fairly typical New York based female

outlaw motorcycle club. They were formed out of, and continue to run in conjunction with, their male counterparts, the Sandman Motorcycle Club, with whom they share the same back patch, a white hooded skull superimposed upon a black Maltese cross, bordered top and bottom by a pair of rockers which read Sandman and N.Y.C. respectively. Although they operate in close harmony with the male club, sharing a common set of rules and procedures for membership, their chapters are entirely independent of one another, exercising autonomy in all operational matters.

Some of their members are legally married to Sandman men and others enjoy more casual relationships with members of the associate club, but often the women, who range in age from their mid-teens to early-thirties, live together in a close communal lifestyle in the group's Coney Island clubhouse, sharing transient lovers and collectively rearing their offspring, the Sandman Tots.

The Sandman Ladies are predominantly black, oriental, Puerto Rican and Dominican, drawn from the ghetto blocks of the Bronx, where they have been well schooled in a life of crime and violence before joining the club. In common with the bulk of non-motorcycle orientated New York street gangs, who they look down upon as 'riff-raff', the Sandman Ladies are well able to take care of themselves in a fight which, considering the somewhat precarious nature of their chosen lifestyle, is a positive asset. They regularly battle it out with rival female, and sometimes male, clubs who infringe their territorial rights, their menfolk or their 'rackets', money making activities which usually involve some form of drug deal. Many of their members have an extensive history of criminal convictions and have served their apprenticeships in the violent world of Juvenile Hall, before graduating to adult penal establishments where they become increasingly

hardened to life on the wild side.

There is no love lost between the Sandman Ladies and the other prominent New York female outlaw clubs, particularly the Crazy Homicide Sisters and the Black Bitches from Canarsie, the Dragons and the Chosen Ones from East Harlem, the Mau Mau Sisters from Flatbush, and the Bronx based Immortals and Roman Queens, with whom the struggle for street supremacy is vicious and, on occasions, deadly. Knives, guns and other equally lethal weapons are wielded in earnest, and the women take an unconcealed pride in their ability to vanquish opponents. So much so that fights between female outlaw clubs are as frequent, if not more frequent, than those between male clubs.

As well as drug dealing, some Sandman Ladies derive an income from working as, or controlling, prostitutes, the legacy of a ghetto upbringing. Others, less inclined to surrender their bodies to men, eke out a living in the many seedy massage parlours or topless bars which throng their patch. They look upon the club as a sort of refuge from the hassles involved, and also as a physically supportive unit able to exact retribution on their behalf if they come unstuck as inevitably, sooner or later, they are bound to do. The club will bail them out if they get arrested, hide them if they're on the run, and always takes their side against outsiders, whatever the facts of the case in point. And, in return, every member of the Sandman Ladies has a fierce loyalty to her club, defending its honour against all attacks.

Connie the club president, a mother of three who is in her late thirties, is married to Gino, president of the Sandmen. She rules her chapter with an iron hand, doing her best to see that 'her girls' keep out of serious trouble. Connie despises

her surroundings and regards the formation of a motorcycle club as a way of liberating both herself and the others from the chains of the ghetto. On their bikes they can escape from its tentacles, if only for the weekend, and can take a much needed breather on the open road. Occasionally, when there is sufficient money in the communal club funds, they will mount up and leave New York for a longer trip to one of the many national biker gatherings held along the Eastern seaboard, to spend their time partying with other outlaw clubs with whom they have built up an empathetic relationship over the years. Connie's overriding ambition is to one day get out of New York City on a permanent basis and relocate her club in the country, where they can ride their bikes and live their lives with the minimum of hassle from the police and rival clubs. In the meantime however the Sandman Ladies continue to build and strengthen their extended family network, their chosen means of collective survival in a world which would not hesitate to crush them if devoid of its protection.

Like the Sandman Ladies, the Roman Queens are a South Bronx based all female outlaw motorcycle club. However, unlike the former, they retain a much stronger affinity with the numerous street gangs with whom they share, or often dispute, their territory. They are all avowed lesbians and hardened street-fighters who owe no such allegiance to a parallel male group.

Founded in the early seventies by president Vicki, a one-time old lady of the president of the Savage Skulls Motorcycle Club and ex-member of the Queens' bitter rivals, the Immortals, they are a force to be reckoned with in the streets of downtown New York City. For them it is the excitement of physical combat which surpasses the attraction of motorcycling, which occupies a

decidedly secondary position in order of importance. Says Vicki:

"I always have short hair ... Always a D.A. I don't like long hair, because when you fight, they pull it. And I can't stand to have my hair pulled ..."¹⁵⁶

The Roman Queens, in common with male outlaw clubs, wear patches on the back of their denim jackets. Their centre patch is yet another variation of the near ubiquitous skull design, with the words Roman Queens - New York embroidered in white above and below. Vicki herself flies her patches on a black silk cut-off with the word 'Prez' emblazoned on the front to signify her rank. She has served numerous terms of imprisonment for a variety of crimes, ranging in seriousness from pickpocketing to possession of firearms. She was first remanded in a girls' home for pickpocketing at the age of eleven and has been involved in one form of racket or another ever since:

"I like it there. I enjoyed it. We used to roller-skate. Play games. But the only thing, they were all girls. So I turned gay. I was young ... I didn't know what the hell it was ... I used to go around pickpocketing people so I could go there. Because I liked it there. It was girls like me ..."¹⁵⁷

Vicki's two elder brothers were members of the Nomads Motorcycle Club. They taught her how to ride and how to service her own motorcycle, and also how to take care of herself in a fight.

"My brothers taught me how to survive, how to shoot every kind of gun there is ... shotguns. Everything. It started off with a small one and went up to a big one. The first time I shot a forty-five, it kicked me so bad it flew out of my hands. I was scared! I let it go ..."¹⁵⁸

Today, Vicki always carries a gun 'just in case', and she

would not hesitate to use it if she thought that her club was being slighted in some way. In her own words, she has been an 'outlaw from birth', and is determined to continue along that path for as long as she is able. However, it is unlikely that either Vicki or the Roman Queens will ever manage to overcome the handicap of their ghetto upbringing and will remain, despite the trappings of an outlaw motorcycle club, just another minor league street gang.

In actual fact, New York appears to have a virtual monopoly on such female quasi-outlaw motorcycle clubs, a legacy of the fifties when girls were used extensively as messengers, decoys, drugs couriers and general dogsbodies by the male street gangs of the time. By the early sixties however these 'gang girls' were beginning to establish an identity of their own by forming their own divisions of the male gangs, building separate but parallel organisational substructures. The street-hardened members of these girl gangs were known as Febs, a term which the various different groupings quickly adopted as a suffix to their chosen gang name - i.e. Swordsman Febs, Killer Febs, Fittybop Febs, etc., etc. A survey conducted on behalf of the Juvenile Division of the New York Police Dept. revealed that between 1959 and 1962 the number of Febs in New York City had doubled from 3,000 to 6,000 and was continuing to grow.

The Febs, emulating the behaviour of their male mentors, carried razors, and would frequently use them to determine the outcome of territorial disputes, known as 'rumbles' or 'bops'.

"A bop could result from anything or nothing. Muscling in on a Feb's man would bring it on as sure as a fellow gang member's being killed. Stealing a manner of dress from a rival gang or working their turf or 'sounding off' (provoking) them would mean retaliation. In Brooklyn two teenage Febs cut each other to

shreds, slapfighting with razor blades held between the fingers of their open hands. At issue was the question of who was the better lover. One Harlem Deb kicked and bludgeoned another's face and then left her for dead because she 'looked bad' at her ...

"One of the ugliest rituals practiced by hardcore Debs came after a triumph over another gang. After a bop the final stamp of humiliation was to hold a rival down while the gang sexually abused her ..." ¹⁵⁹

Rival gang violence wasn't the only threat to the Debs. Rape and abuse by males was a constant danger, a danger which could only be prevented, or at least minimised, by a further strengthening of gang solidarity. Girls joined the Deb gangs for both social and economic reasons. They sought a measure of protection from the day to day brutality of street life as well as an income which the gang, with its varied criminal interests, was able to provide. Different gangs worked well defined territories, mugging, purse-snatching, pickpocketing and worse. In the mid-sixties, the influential New York Times waged a strong law and order campaign against the Debs, drawing widespread public attention to the problem and forcing the authorities to mount a concerted attack on the perpetrators.

Headlines like 'Gang Girls Terrorize Subway', telling the story of gang girls, who armed with knives, guns and monkey wrenches, walked from carriage to carriage on the New York subway demanding money and jewellery from frightened passengers, abounded. And a front page feature headed 'Gangs of Girls Terrorize Staff and the Retarded at Children's Unit', revealed how, "gangs of girls both in and out of a facility for the 'disturbed' worked with male gangs to steal from the facility. Councillors as well as retarded teenage girls were routinely stripped, raped and sexually abused. One cop said, 'There's

no way of knowing whether this is lesbian or sadistic.' Numerous girls were turned out to work as prostitutes on the streets ... (The) victims were afraid to speak up for fear of reprisals"¹⁶⁰

As a result of the furore caused by the New York Times campaign the police, in conjunction with the social services, instituted a massive crackdown on the Debs, forcing many of the gangs to disband, and driving the more persistent to seek alternative, less publicly contentious sources of income. Some gangs joined forces, consolidating operations and further formalising their organisational structures.

In the wake of the very widespread publicity surrounding the activities of the Hells Angels and other prominent outlaw motorcycle clubs, a few of the gangs, notably those aligned with male motorcycle orientated gangs, took to wearing patches on their backs and began organising themselves around the motorcycle as the prime focus of subcultural activity. These were the forerunners of today's New York based female outlaw clubs, who still remain relatively isolated from their sister clubs in the rest of the United States. With rare exceptions, the vast majority of these clubs are content to cling to their street gang heritage, seldom venturing beyond their self-imposed territorial boundaries, and taking little interest in the doings of the wider motorcycle subculture.

It has therefore been left to the less numerous but more widely travelled Californian-based female outlaw clubs, like the Scooter Vamps and the Dragons, to carry the flag of women's liberation within the biker movement. The various chapters of these clubs operate very much along the well established lines of male outlaw clubs, taking a greater interest in their machines, socialising with other clubs, and covering considerable distances

to attend major gatherings like Daytona and Sturgis. The Scooter Vamps all ride chopped Harleys and can be seen in attendance at virtually every regional and national biker function. The club organises its own events, including custom shows, and recently founded the Women's Prison Alliance dedicated to the support of female bikers behind bars.

The Vamps, along with several more minor clubs, are members of the Alliance of Women Bikers, which exists to coordinate social activities for women bikers, both club members and non-aligned, throughout North America. And there is every indication that, as more and more women take to the highways aboard their own bikes, the numbers of all-female outlaw clubs will increase correspondingly.

Probably the only all-women outlaw club outside the United States is the South African Libra M.C. which has two chapters based in Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth. More commonly known as 'Bernie's Angels', after their president and founder Bernie Wall, a tough tattooed blonde in her mid-forties, the club has around a dozen members who wear the Libra colours on the back of their cut-offs. The emblem itself depicts a leather jacketted woman with long flowing hair riding through the Libra cycle on a motorcycle. Bernie adopted the name Libra, not just because it was her own birth sign, but more particularly because 'it is the symbol of balance'.

The nucleus of the club have been riding together since the late-sixties, although formal rules were not drawn up until some ten years later, and have long been an accepted part of the South African biker subculture, turning up on all the major runs and rallies. They are all experienced motorcyclists who build and maintain their own machines and take an immense pride in their

ability to do so. In an interview with the Johannesburg Sunday Tribune, Bernie explained how she feels about the club:

"Going on a run with these women is quite an experience. From the moment we climb on the bikes there's a feeling of excitement and camaraderie ...

"A bike is the only thing I respect. I'm scared of it and so it's a challenge. If I didn't have the bike, I don't know what I'd do.

"It's a prestige thing to be a women biker in a male world ...

"Riding together is a fantastic feeling, it lifts our spirits. We love our bikes, but we're not out to prove that Women's Lib works, we just get on with it.

"My mother still phones me up everytime she hears of a motorcycle accident just to tell me about it ... That sort of thing makes me even more determined to keep on riding.

"There's a unity within the self when you're riding well - it's part of the joy of riding.

"Once upon a time my son used to pester me to lend him my bike, before he got his own. Now my daughter's nearly old enough to get her own licence.

"I can't see myself ever settling down, settling for second best, riding is in my blood. I'm a lady biker, and yes, I do have tattoos. I'm damn proud of them too, and according to my bros, I'm cuddly and not at all ugly. But I get mightily pissed off at having shit laid on me by anybody, particularly by non-bikin' wankers" 161

The no compromise attitude of Bernie's Angels has got the club into a fair amount of scrapes with the South African auth-

orities. They say that they don't go around looking for trouble, but all the same admit that they have been barred from pubs and turned away from campsites, and on occasions 'things have got a bit out of hand'. They take particular exception to remarks made about their sex by members of the public and will retaliate, sometimes violently.

"We're not going to be that easily intimidated just because we're women bike riders,' says Bernie. 'One day we were at this stop sign in Durban, Karen (another club member) was on the pillion, waiting for the lights to change. A gust of wind just came down the street and blew us over. It was so embarrassing. A guy in a car started laughing at us lying in the road. I got up, went over to him, and punched him in the mouth. He soon stopped laughing. I got three months in jail for that, but I'd do it again tomorrow ... It's a question of self-respect. If you don't respect yourself, who the hell else is going to?'¹⁶²

In Britain, and indeed throughout Europe, where there is no significant history of girl gangs, female outlaw motorcycle clubs are non-existent. It wasn't until the sixties gave way to the seventies, when a new breed of biker, drawn from a much less narrow sociocultural background than that of the archetypal inner-city working class rocker, took over from their erstwhile comrades as the major stylistic influence within the motorcycle subculture, that women's opportunities for advancement on an equal basis with their male counterparts began to slowly improve.

True, they were still, in the main, back seat participants, now referred to as chicks instead of birds, but chopper riders, influenced as they undoubtedly were by the philosophies of hippiedom, were far more inclined towards questioning the prevailing social attitudes which had hitherto governed male-female role relations.

Generally speaking, this new breed of bikers were somewhat older than the predominantly teenaged rockers, having taken up motorcycling as a central life interest later in life than their subcultural predecessors, who had usually been friendly with each other since schooldays. With the exception of the one-percenter outlaw clubs at the hardcore end of the spectrum, bikers tended to more readily accept women's participation. They saw nothing wrong in equating a relatively conventional family life with full participation in subcultural activities and would not have dreamt of hanging up their colours just because a baby was on the way. Unlike the rockers, who seldom built their own machines, being content to modify manufacturers' products to suit their own particular style - the cafe-racer - chopper riders took an immense pride in their ability to build their own bikes from the ground up. During the winter, their homes would be dominated by chopper building activities as they busied themselves in the construction of a fresh mount for the coming season and, as the men developed their mechanical and artistic skills, so too the women they lived with took an interest in the nuts and bolts of the subculture. Some developed skills of their own, like custom painting, engraving or leather working, whilst others, with the encouragement of their bike-building boyfriends, took to the road on mounts of their own.

Today, although still very much in the minority, it is not at all unusual to see women bikers astride their own bikes at gatherings like the Kent Custom Bike Show. And, as the overall number of female motorcyclists continues to rise, there is a concomitant increase in the proportion of them who build and ride custom machines of their own fabrication. Some women builders have successfully established themselves as innovative chopper builders and have won awards for their work in major shows, whilst others have become well known for their professional

expertise in specialist areas of the building process. In fact, one of the most important British shows, the annual South and West Custom and Classic Show, which regularly attracts a crowd of over twenty thousand outlaw bikers, is organised by a woman biker, Lizzie Stott, who also happens to be Vice-President of the Motorcycle Action Group.

At the Kent Show, I spoke to Carol Lucas and Mandy Clegg, partners in Amazon Art, a custom spraying business in North London, about their involvement in the biker subculture:

Painting custom bikes for a living isn't the sort of thing that women usually get advised to do by careers mistresses at school. How did the two of you get into it?

Mandy:

"Well I left school with very few actual qualifications. I've always been a bike enthusiast and when I met Carol - Carol's a trained artist who went to work in design studios and was bored with that type of lifestyle, and I was bored with doing dead-end jobs and getting nowhere - we put the two together, the love of bikes and the art and we came up with this as a career."

And you can actually make a living out of doing this?

Mandy:

"Well we have been doing for eighteen months."

Which of you actually does the painting?

Mandy:

"We both do. We share the work. It comes out quite well because I do the preparation and the actual spraying, Carol does all the trick artwork, and I do the lacquering."

When you come to a show like this you're obviously in competition

with a lot of other people ... Do you feel that your work measures up?

Mandy:

"Personally, I think that the detail of our artwork is at least as good as the best that the show has to offer, and it's better than most ..."

This is, almost undeniably, a rather sexist organisation. Don't you find yourselves out on a limb as women offering this sort of service?

Carol:

"No. I think it's fun really."

Aren't there any problems?

Carol:

"We have problems occasionally, but it's fun winding the men up now and then ..."

Does it surprise the guys when they drop into the shop and find that the painters that they're entrusting their pride and joy to are women?

Carol:

"It does the occasional one, but most of the time they appreciate that perhaps women have more patience to do this sort of work. And once they see the standard of the work we do, then they have no qualms about giving us the job."

What about doing the barbarian scenes we see on some of the bikes the nude women, the bondage, and other sexist material? Does it bother you doing that?

Mandy:

"Well it does yes, but the male punters they like that sort

of thing on their tanks."

You don't turn away business?

Carol:

"No ..."

By far the majority of this new breed of women bikers are the wives or girlfriends of experienced male bikers. Jacki, the old lady of Charlie, a leading member of the Kent Hells Angels, rides her own prize-winning chopper, Little Red, which she both planned and built herself. She has had her handiwork featured in many custom bike magazines, including Fasyriders, and firmly believes in doing things for herself. By day she holds down a cashier's job with a high street bank, but in the evenings and at weekends she is to be unfailingly found in the garage, welding, moulding, painting, wrenching and anything else that comes along. Jacki is five feet one, isn't built like a female wrestler and likes to think of herself as a suburban housewife who just happens to enjoy messing about with bikes.

"I hope this isn't a big anti-men thing you're writing", said Jacki, between mouthfuls of lager. "I like men. I just hate it when they think I can't handle a big bike. I wouldn't have built it if I couldn't handle it, would I? They don't seem to mind girls on little bikes so much, or if they haven't passed their test. It's still a competition with some men, although weirdly enough not club guys, who you would have thought would be the worst offenders. I really like burning off little boys when they're being all funny about it, or I say: 'Look, I can piss all over you, so shut up'. And I can, so they have to ..."

"My life revolves ninety-nine per cent around bikes. It has to, I'm married to a Hells Angel. When I first started working

at the bank I couldn't even look at my bike outside work because I just wanted to get on it and ride off somewhere. My work is boring and repetitive; in a factory at least you can go off into a daydream when you're bored, but working in a bank you have to concentrate. One day I'd like to give up work and build bikes full time, but I can't see that happening yet. In the meantime I'll keep on as I am, using my job to finance my leisure.

"I tend to keep clear of other girls who ride bikes ... There's quite a rivalry between some of the girls on the bike scene, like if you've been the only girl with a bike on show and you're used to that and a new girl turns up. I never get that involved because I'm not doing it for money, it's just that I like to take a pride in what I can build."¹⁶³

A growing number of women bikers choose to ride alone or in mixed groups, preferring to take their chances alongside the men rather than have to rely on one man for protection. Clad in denim and sporting tattoos, there is little to tell them apart until they remove their crash helmets and reveal their gender. That's the way they like it. They're not looked down on as people who can't take care of themselves, who need to be insulated from the rigours of the road. Hilary and Shirley, a bank clerk and a secretary from Bournemouth typify the breed. They ride a near identical pair of mildly customised Triumphs and travel far and wide to attend biker events.

"It's so good", says Hilary a.k.a. Satan's Daughter, "that everyone is into the same sort of thing. We do what we want. We get wrecked and then a little later we get balled. It's our choice ...

"I'm twenty-seven years old ... I've been riding on and

off for nine years, so I'm no weekend biker. I've defended my lifestyle to many against all the usual arguments and I still haven't given up. If I do get put on by somebody, I don't scream discrimination, I fight back ..."¹⁶⁴

This developing pattern of independent female involvement in the British motorcycle subculture mirrors that which took place in the late seventies in the United States, where today there exists a thriving women bikers' movement. They even have their own national magazine catering for the needs of women bikers. Called Harley Women it is published on a monthly basis by an Illinois-based collective known as the Asphalt Angels, and was launched in 1982 to "give a woman's view of biking". Its pages contain feature bikes, run coverage and 'human interest' articles, written by women bikers for women bikers, designed to keep women in touch with the latest developments in the biker world, of which they consider themselves to be an integral part.

Even mainstream, male-orientated custom magazines, like Easyriders in the U.S.A. and Back Street Heroes in Britain, are progressively attempting to shed the sexist image in order to encompass an increasingly large female readership and, assuming that present trends continue, it seems likely that before the onset of the 1990's women will make up a significant proportion of the biker population.

I should like to round off this chapter with a quote from an interview with a West German veteran woman biker and eighty-two year old grandmother, Maria Ruoff, who had the following words to say about her long career in the motorcycle subculture.

"I don't think it's any big deal at 82 to ride a motorcycle ... I hate riding in cars - I feel so closed in. Even in the winter I go out on my motorcycle. I usually don't go more than

fifty miles an hour. Riding is a joy for me, so why should I hurry? I like to look at the scenery.

"I get along especially well with young people - they think it's great to see an old grandma like me zipping around on a motorcycle.

"Recently I went to a motorcycle meeting about five miles from my home. When I climbed off my bike and took off my helmet and everyone saw the little old lady, they started cheering and applauding.

"I think more grandmothers should get out and try it. It certainly beats sitting in a rocking chair.

"I work in a local grocery store I own during the day, but in the evening I go to one of the local biker bars to play cards with the men.

"We play for money and I usually win, so it pays for my gas and the beer I drink. But I'm careful not to drink too much.

"I'd hate to get caught for drunk driving.

"I've had my motorcycle licence since 1938 and I've never had an accident or a fine yet. People stare when they see my old 1940 DKW motorcycle coming down the road. It's a vintage item - and when they see that the rider is purely vintage, too, they nearly fall.

"I bought my first motorcycle in 1938 and rode all over Europe on it. My father was a mechanic and he taught me how to do my own repairs, which I still do today.

"For me, checking spark plugs, changing the oil and testing the brakes comes as easily as washing the dishes - and is a lot more interesting.

"A mistake too many old people make is giving up things they love doing just because they're 'too old'. When I get on my motorcycle, I feel like a young woman again, with the wind rushing in my face.

"I'd be crazy to give that up ..."¹⁶⁵

Which, if you think about it, just about says it all ...

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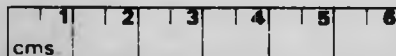
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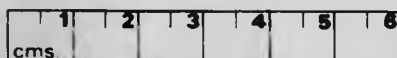
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'MYTH AND REALITY IN THE MOTORCYCLE SUBCULTURE'

IAN RICHARD HARRIS B.A. (hons)

TWO VOLUMES

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CHAPTER XVII: 'I AIN'T PREJUDICED, I HATE EVERYBODY: POLITICS
AND RACE IN THE MOTORCYCLE SUBCULTURE

"One thing was disturbingly evident. The lack of black or brown faces and the prominence of swastikas, Confederate flags and Union Jacks, symbols of the right ..." 166

New Society on the Kent Custom Bike Show

"We've got nothing against nobody ... We're not for them, we're not against them. It can be a bloke from any race, any creed, any colour ... If he does any sort of wrong to any one of us then we'll leap on him. It doesn't mean we're anti-black because he's a black man ..."

A white Hells Angel 167

"When they mention my colour it's only in jokes and things like that. They don't actually mean it ... If I thought they meant it I wouldn't be here ..."

A black Hells Angel 168

It has often been suggested, by those whose role in life it is to pass uninformed comment upon such matters, that bikers are, to a man, a group of swaggering, swastika-bedecked racists with a political outlook that would do credit to a Pretorian government minister. We read time and time again, not only in the oversensationalising pages of the tabloid newspapers, but also in much more learned texts, accounts of gangs of Nazi-helmeted white youths mounted on aggressive looking motorcycles, whose ideal of freedom extends no further than the self-proclaimed right to intimidate those members of the community whom they perceive as being weaker than themselves. And, more often than not, the tacit implication is that the victims of this systematic intimidation

are to be found amongst the ethnic minorities - Asian, West Indian, Jewish - in fact anybody who fails to conform to the stereotypical image of the macho white male.

Whilst it is true to say that, in Britain at least, as New Society accurately observes, there is certainly a lack of black or brown faces amongst the crowd at major biker events like the Kent Custom Bike Show, and also that a sprinkling of swastikas, Confederate flags and Union Jacks are in evidence, it should not be automatically posited from such a superficial observation that all bikers are per se racist thugs. Such a contention merely serves to illustrate the inability of the observer to locate the meaning of such symbolism within the parameters of the subculture concerned. It is quite ridiculous to assume that objects which, in one particular subcultural context might well be construed as 'symbols of the right', hold exactly the same symbolic meanings for any other subcultural group which may, for reasons of its own, choose to incorporate such symbols within its subjective value structure.

The fact that a small minority of bikers choose to adorn their jackets with items of Nazi regalia is 'disturbingly evident' of nothing at all, save that of the appallingly bad sartorial taste of the wearers, and surely only the most naive of inexperienced sociological observers could state with confidence that the display of Confederate flags and Union Jacks in such a setting is indicative of the right wing tendencies of the entire subcultural group. In the event that such a simplistic equation could be made, I suggest that those of us whose political sympathies lie in the opposite direction are in deep deep shit. No, before we can lay claim to an understanding of the political implications, if any, that such symbols have for the group concerned, we must

first seek to establish to contextual meanings that they have for the members of the subculture, both historically and contemporarily.

In the United States, the wearing of Nazi regalia, swastikas, Iron Crosses, S.S. Badges, W.W. II helmets and the like by outlaw bikers goes back as far as the 1940s. Originally, the practice had two functions: firstly, and most importantly, it showed that the individual wearer had 'class', an indefinable quality which served to elevate his standing in the eyes of his peers. And, secondly, the collective appropriation of such paraphernalia, offensive as it obviously was to a public psychologically if not actually physically accustomed to regarding the wearers of such symbols as the enemy, self-consciously proclaimed this new breed of folk devil to be rebels who held even the most sacred of conventional values up to ridicule. It set them apart, not only from the straight citizens who they so despised, but also from the overwhelming mass of their fellow motorcyclists, the law-abiding ninety-nine per cent, generating and sustaining a sense of solidarity necessary to ensure group survival in a thoroughly hostile environment. This rejection of conventional values was symbolised by the outlaws repugnant appearance, in which the swastikas played a central role together with long hair, beards, tattoos and general cultivated filth 'snapped the minds of the citizens' and, whether by accident or design, further added to the bikers' already pervasive notoriety.

It is nowhere recorded when or where the practice first became de rigeur for outlaw bikers, but it is highly likely that it arose out of the habit of returning G.I.s to bring home with them war souvenirs taken from captured German prisoners, which they would display on their uniforms as victory symbols. As many of the early American outlaw clubs had memberships made up largely, if

not exclusively, of disaffected ~~ex-servicemen~~, it is not inconceivable that some of those involved continued to wear on their civilian riding apparel what they proudly regarded as spoils of war, not intentionally going out of their way to upset or outrage. However, as the practice became more widespread, it soon caught the attention of a media hungry to supply its readership with increasingly lurid tales of the by now eminently newsworthy anti-social doings of these wild young men. Thus, the bikers came to appreciate the potential shock value of what had hitherto been regarded as a relatively harmless form of personal adornment, and accordingly the wearing of German military regalia became routinised amongst all outlaw bikers.

In an interview conducted in the early 1960s, Freewheelin' Frank, secretary of the San Francisco chapter of the Hells Angels, had the following words to say about the wearing of Nazi paraphernalia:

"People come up to me and ask me why I wear a swastika and why all of us have these German medals and other items from the Hitler regime. For instance, one time I and about ten brother Hells Angels went down south to see a corporation lawyer who had big plans about making him get rich. Later we grabbed a bite to eat at a snack bar on Sunset Strip, and as we were paying our checks a man walked up to us. I heard someone say, 'Excuse me.' I turned around and a man was standing there with very curious eyes. He said, 'Why do you wear swastikas?' Brother Ernie of Daly City, turned around also, and we both looked him up and down to see what frame of mind he was in. I decided to give him as even an answer as I could of the understanding I had at the time as to why I wore a swastika. I said I said, 'We feel that we are a superior race. The swastika signifies a superior race. We feel

we are a superior race.'

"'Which means everything and nothing at all,' is what Ernie said.

"I added, 'We feel that we are a superior race - it helps us generate togetherness'

"(But) anyone who wants to see another Adolf Hitler is definitely on a bummer ... I have a German flag that hangs from the ceiling of an archlike window balcony. This creates a stimulating sight to anyone who might look at it when walking through my door or drivin' by on the street or walking by on the sidewalk. Either way, they're going to think something. Really the only difference now is the German flag was red, white and black. And the American flag is red, white and blue ..." 169

In a 1965 article in True Magazine entitled 'Barbarians on Bikes', the author maintains that: "Wearing Nazi badges and medals is just another way of showing class." 170 And a Hells Angels member, Jimmy from Oakland, is quoted as saying: "Just because I wear a swastika on my arm doesn't mean I'm a Nazi. It's just to get people shook up." 171

Paul Krassner, writing in the February 1966 issue of The Realist, confirms this. "The Hells Angels have always been apolitical," he states. 172

An article by William Murray in The Post agrees. After seeing the Angels' swastikas, Luftwaffe insignia and German helmets, Murray formed the opinion that: "The Nazi uniforms are worn only because they have become identified, through comic strips and men's adventure magazines, with the license to band together, to push people around, to be somebody. 'When you walk into a place where people can see you, you want to look as

repulsive as possible,' said one Berdoo Angel. 'We're bastards to the world and they're bastards to us.'" ¹⁷³

Hunter S. Thompson, perhaps the world's best known authority on the subject, writing in The Nation, echoes the same line. He quotes the Lynch Report, which states that, "Hell's Angels ... members have been observed wearing various types of Luftwaffe insignia and reproductions of German Iron Crosses." ¹⁷⁴ Thompson concludes however that this is, "purely for decorative and shock effect. The Hell's Angels are apolitical and are no more racist than any other ignorant young thugs." ¹⁷⁵

Finally, we have the word of Hells Angels president Sonny Barger himself, interviewed in the Los Angeles Times in the late 1960s:

"This stuff - the iron crosses, the Nazi insignia, the German helmets - that's to shock people. To let 'em know we're individualists. To let 'em know we're Angels ... Hell, we buy that junk in dime stores." ¹⁷⁶

Thus, it is probably true to say that the Hells Angels, in common with other outlaw motorcycle clubs of the era, appropriated the iconography of Nazism purely for the shock value, rather than for any intrinsic political motive. Furthermore, it must be born in mind that, whilst not exactly socially acceptable, swastikas and similar items of Nazi regalia, do not have anywhere near as severe a symbolic impact in the United States as they do in Britain and the rest of Europe, where the wartime wearers of such regalia, the armed forces of the Third Reich, presented a more immediate threat to the health and welfare of the citizenry. The American Nazi Party was, and still is, a legitimate political organisation, however reprehensible that might be, constitutionally permitted to march in uniform on the street and, in doing so,

arouses little comment beyond the humorous.

Paul Krassner, in the Realist article, cites a further example which serves to support the theory that the Angels wearing of swastikas does not necessarily signify neo-Nazi political leanings. He says:

"In Richmond, Calif., the Colony Furniture Co. refused to recognize a carpenters' union, and when the union called a strike, the company brought in members of both the Hell's Angels and Hitler's American Sons as scabs. But when the latter group tried to indoctrinate the former with Fascist philosophy, the Hell's Angels listened carefully and then beat the Nazis up."¹⁷⁷

And, whilst that might not serve to guarantee the Hells Angels pride of place in American labour history, it certainly gives lie to the suggestion that they receive any form of political patronage from the American Nazis.

Perhaps the best known instance of the Angels' intervention in the political arena occurred on 16th November, 1965, when eighteen club members, led by president Sonny Barger, attacked fifteen thousand peace marchers in Berkeley, California, as they made their way from the campus of the University of California towards the Oakland Army Terminal during a Vietnam Day Committee demonstration. A violent struggle ensued between the Angels and escorting police, in the course of which six bikers were arrested and one officer's leg broken. According to Krassner, an eyewitness to preceeding events:

"The Oakland police had offered to drop certain charges against the Angels if they would cause trouble for the 'peaceniks' ... When the Angels attacked, it looked as though the Oakland police had parted like the Red Sea to let them into Berkeley

territory, and only the Berkeley police had been active in subduing them." 178

Krassner's account of the circumstances leading up to the flare-up between the outlaws and the peace marchers tallies with Thompson's view of things. He says:

"(The) demonstrators moved down Telegraph Avenue, one of the main streets of Berkeley, and came face to face - at the city limits - with a four-hundred man wall of Oakland police wearing helmets and holding riot sticks at port arms. They were deployed in a flying wedge formation, with Police Chief Tootham in the central, ball-carrier's position, giving orders over many walkie-talkies. It was obvious that the march was not going to cross the Oakland line without a fight. I approached the confrontation from the Oakland side - but even with a tape recorder, camera and Press credentials, it took almost thirty minutes to get through the no-man's land of the police wall. Most people - even some legitimate journalists - were turned back.

"So it is still beyond my understanding how a dozen Hell's Angels, obviously intent on causing trouble, managed to filter through and attack the leaders of the protest march ..." 179

The key to this bizarre affair probably lies in the press conference given by Barger in the wake of the ill-fated Bass Lake run a few months earlier when, complaining bitterly about continual police harassment of the club, he delivered the following ultimatum to assembled newspaper reporters:

"If they (the police) don't take the heat off us we're going to have to do something drastic. I sure would hate to see that happen." 180

But, hate it or not, it looks as though Barger did make the decision to do 'something drastic' in order to 'take the heat off' the Angels and, that something drastic, might well have been arranged with the full knowledge and connivance of the Oakland police.

If, as it would appear, the Angels' 'attack' on the Vietnam Day Committee demonstration was a 'put up job', it certainly had the desired effect. The club's public image was transformed overnight. Suddenly, far from being the communist trained monsters that molested women and ransacked towns, they were eulogised by the press and the establishment as American patriots, whose stirring example of national loyalty could be regarded as a worthy lesson to youth. Even the Attorney General, an acknowledged opponent of outlaw motorcyclists, publicly suspended law enforcement activities against the club, and it once more became safe to ride the streets in groups without incurring the unwelcome attention of police officers.

The heat was off for the Angels, for the time being at least. For the first time in their careers, they had powerful friends. Several Young Republican Clubs passed resolutions commending them for their patriotic action, and newspapers commented favourably upon their way of life. Fred Ullner, director of the influential pressure group Republicans for Conservative Action, announced that he had founded an organisation called Friends of the Hells Angels to pay the fines imposed on the six club members arrested in connection with the injuries occasioned on Berkeley police officers during the attack. Ullner, describing the Angels as patriots, said, "The Hells Angels only did what everybody else wanted to do. At least they weren't draft-dodgers even if they have had notoriety in the past."¹⁸¹

In fact, whether unbeknown to, or conveniently ignored by Mr. Ullner, very many members of the Hells Angels and other outlaw clubs dodged the draft for a variety of reasons, personal or political, evading the military authorities by adopting aliases and joining up with associated chapters in different parts of the country. They had no love for the discipline of the armed forces and, whilst being justly renowned for their ability to handle themselves in a street fight, weren't at all keen to travel halfway across the world to run the risk of getting shot in the service of Uncle Sam.

In his autobiography, San Francisco Hells Angels chapter secretary Freewheelin' Frank Reynolds, records a conversation between himself and Andy, a brother Hells Angel who had recently received his draft notification:

"The bastards are going to try and draft me tomorrow! ..."

"I said, 'What the hell was it I heard you say? About goin' to war in Viet Nam?' And the same time I laughed, and said, 'They're sure to lose the war if they take you.'

"He says, 'Every bastard is goin' to lose if they take me tomorrow.'

"I said, 'What's all this about anyway?'

"He said, 'YFAHHH, I got a letter this morning when I woke up. What a bummer!'

"I said, 'You can't go into no lousy Army, you're already in one.'

"He said, 'You're goddam right, and I'm goin' to stay in it.'

"Before leavin' I promised Andy I'd be with him at seven o'

clock in the morning to meet the bus which is supposed to take him away to the Army and reassured him, 'I know they'll never take you - they never take any of us when we went over to the draft board together and let 'em know who we was.'"182

It is quite evident that, despite their new found public patriotism, privately the bikers had little inclination to get mixed up with the war. Freewheelin' Frank expressed the Angels' view in the following words:

"One time a retired general wanted to take the Hell's Angels and train them specially for a guerilla force in Viet Nam, but the plan fell through. We heard about it one day, then we didn't hear about it again. But what we heard was that a helluva lot of the general's time was spent in running down the trip to who knows who? I never got in on it. I never did like robots anyway. I think the reason why we never did actually go into training as a guerilla force is because we might bring too much honesty to the war. We might turn it into the direction of a true-winning path. In other words, we didn't fit into the production lines. They don't want someone that's after blood and guts. They just keep inventing words like technicians and yat-ta-dat-ta-dat-dat.

"The Viet Nam war trip is to me like a high school graduate trip running a bulldozer in smashing and blowing up machinery. Destruction in metal so that these phonys back home can keep their Pu Pont production lines rolling. Every now and then they do sacrifice a few lives to make it look real ... I hate what I can't understand but I know is phony. I have a wandering mind and I am too damn dumb to ever be called something such as a communist - or anything which has to do with bringing the country down. Cause believe me, brother, this country is as down as it is ever going to get ..."183

Barger, the Angels' official spokesman, continued to court publicity however, stating that he intended to confront the next anti-war demonstration with "the biggest bunch of outlaw bikers anybody ever saw in California",¹⁸⁴ and pledged that the club would counter all such marches in the future.

Allen Ginsberg and other leading representatives of the peace movement met with the Angels in an attempt to persuade them to reconsider their position and call off their threatened opposition, with the result that, in a dramatic turnaround, the club called a press conference on 19th November 1965, the eve of the next big march, and announced that they had decided not to intervene. A press release clarified the Angels' position. It read:

"Although we have stated our intention to counterdemonstrate at this despicable, un-American activity, we believe that in the interest of public safety and the protection of the good name of Oakland, we should not justify the V.D.C. by our presence ... because our patriotic concern for what these people are doing to our great action may provoke us to violent acts ... (and that) any physical encounter would only produce sympathy for this mob of traitors."¹⁸⁵

With one neat stroke of genius, the Angels had managed not only to impress the Republican Party with their patriotic zeal, and thereby secure continued police 'cooperation', but they had also managed to placate their long time friends and mentors in the peace movement, a split with whom would have left them subculturally isolated and open to attack. By withdrawing from their proposed course of action, they at once became the champions of both the left and the right, without having to actually demonstrate their political allegiance to either faction. The wording of the statement caused considerable amusement in the pages of the San

San Francisco underground press, whose 'radical' correspondents praised the Angels for having had one over on the government, whilst at the same time the club continued to enjoy the public patronage of those in authority who had hitherto succeeded in making their lives such a misery.

The Angels parting gesture, no doubt also made 'in the interests of public safety and the protection of the good name of Oakland', was to send a telegram to United States President Lyndon B. Johnson stating the following:

"Dear Mr. President,

"On behalf of myself and my associates I volunteer a group of loyal Americans for behind the lines duty in Viet Nam. We feel that a crack group of trained gorillas (sic) would demoralize the Viet Cong and advance the cause of freedom. We are available for training and duty immediately.

Sincerely

Ralph Barger Jr

Oakland, California

President of Hells Angels" 186

Mission accomplished - all charges brought against the six Angels involved in the disruption of the earlier demonstration are mysteriously dropped at the instigation of the San Francisco District Attorney's office, and the club once more withdraws from the political arena, having proved their loyalty to all sections of the American public. Thompson summed up the Angels brief interventionist period as follows:

"The Hell's Angels are not visionaries, but diehards, and if they are the forerunners or the vanguard of anything it is not the 'moral revolution' in vogue on college campuses, but a fast growing legion of young employables whose untapped energy

will inevitably find the same kind of destructive outlet that 'outlaws' like the Hell's Angels have been finding for years. The difference between the student radicals and the Hell's Angels is that the students are rebelling against the past, while the Angels are fighting the future. Their only common ground is their disdain for the present, or the status quo.

"It goes without saying that some of the student radicals, in Berkeley and on dozens of other campuses, are as wild and aggressive as any Hell's Angels - and that not all the Angels are cruel thugs and potential Nazis. This was especially true before the Angels got their publicity ... (In) early 1965 there were less than a half-dozen Angels who gave a hoot in hell what was happening on the Berkeley campus. If they'd been seriously interested in Red-baiting, they would have made an appearance at some of the free-speech rallies. But they didn't show up. Not even to swagger through the crowds and get their pictures in the papers. Nor - at about the same time - did they harass CORE's picket lines in Jack London Square, in the middle of downtown Oakland! Even in the spring and early summer of 1965, when they were beginning to realize the extent of their infamy, they ignored several opportunities to tangle with both civil rights and Get Out of Vietnam demonstrators. They simply didn't care. Or at least not enough of them cared ...

"Six months earlier the Angels' only real problem had been keeping out of jail, but now they were engage and had to sit through meetings with other people who were engage. A few of the outlaws thrived on the new gig, but for most it was only a drag. And to those who could look back on a decade or more of hostile isolation, it seemed like the end of an era." 187

As Thompson rightly comments, whilst the Oakland Angels'

widely publicised entry into politics might well have got them off the hook with law enforcement officials and restored their flagging prestige within the hippy/radical subcultural nexus, it nevertheless threatened the club's internal stability by alienating long-standing members who had absolutely no desire to involve themselves with people and institutions outside the narrow world of motorcycle outlawdom. They mistrusted politicians, radical or conservative, and regarded the sudden glare of publicity as an unwelcome intrusion into their affairs. Privately, away from the T.V. cameras and press conferences, other Californian chapters were critical of Barger's public relations campaign and put pressure on him to return the club to its former apolitical stance. They had had more than enough of being acclaimed as heroes by people whose motives they mistrusted, and resented the fact that the outlaw image was fast becoming replaced by Hollywood hype. Since their debut on the nation's television screens, they had been inundated with requests to appear on serious chat shows and address all manner of public gatherings, from radical political meetings through to full-blown business conventions. It seemed that they had become public property, unable to function without a constant entourage of journalists anxious to court their opinion on issues of the day. Where once the cops had harassed them and prevented them from 'doing their own thing', now the press was waiting for them at every turn. Film producers queued up to sign them for second-rate bike gang movies, and they were beginning to suffer a loss of standing in the wider biker community, for whom the formerly rough tough leaders of the pack were in danger of becoming just another sanitised commodity. Thus, the Angels' political involvement faded almost as fast as it had appeared. It had been fun while it lasted, but it simply wasn't compatible with the serious business of being an outlaw club and, consequently it had to go.

Since the mid-sixties, the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club have, in common with virtually every other established, patch-wearing outlaw motorcycle club throughout the world, maintained a very strict policy of non-intervention in political matters, and whilst there have been rare documented instances of motorcycle club involvement in right wing fringe groups, the clubs concerned have been transient and non-representative of their subcultural peers. In America, during the early 1970s, a club calling itself the Fourth Reich M.C. attracted media attention because of its connections with the Ku KluxKlan, but in spite of the self-sought publicity that these outlaw 'bikers' received, it later transpired that the majority of them didn't even own motorcycles and were widely regarded as a laughing stock by their peers.

Today, a minority of outlaw club members, including a sprinkling of Hells Angels, continue to sport various forms of Nazi regalia on their colours, but indications are that the reasons behind this are of an habitual rather than a political nature. In a recent series of interviews with American Hells Angels, a leading member of the club's New York chapter was asked why it was that he wore a Nazi badge on the front of his patches. This was his reply:

"This is an S.S. badge. It's an original one. It was a gift from a brother. So I feel a lot about it and I wear it because it was a gift. I don't give a damn what it means as long as a brother gives it to me I'm gonna wear it ... You know, what it meant at the time was that the wearer was the elite of his ocrps. And we regard ourselves as the elite of the bike world ...

"You could say we're fascistic, anti-Semitic or whatever, well I guess I'm the proof that we ain't ..., because I'm Jewish and I sure ain't a fascist, and I sure ain't anti-Semitic because I don't hate myself ..."

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And Fu, a long-standing Oakland Angel and close colleague of president Sonny Barger, added:

"In no way can I see us relating to what happened in Germany during the second world war ... Anybody who would look at us and compare us with the Nazi party has got to be joking ... I don't see why we can't all live in this society without keep trying to cram each other down each other's throats, and trying to make people accept what they don't want to accept. We have our beliefs, the blacks have their's, why should they conflict?"¹⁸⁹

Although many members undoubtedly hold strong political views of various persuasions, it is repeatedly stressed that such views are purely personal and should in no way be taken to reflect the opinion of the club as a whole. Any member, even one of very long standing, seeking to deliberately involve the club name in any way with a political cause, would most certainly become subject to group discipline, up to and including summary expulsion. And although, from time to time, the Angels have been known to use their contacts in political movements to further their own interests these interests are always of a short term instrumental nature, and any longer term associations with party political matters are specifically avoided, whatever the material benefits to be gained.

For instance, when in the late 1960s, Frank #1, president of the Los Angeles (LACO) chapter of the Hells Angels, professional photographer, traveller in literary circles and fervent defender of his brother Angels' civil rights, decided to form an alliance between the club and the American Civil Liberties Union, he met with strong opposition from Sonny Barger, who reportedly referred to the A.C.L.U. as "nothing but a bunch of Communist bums".¹⁹⁰ However, after much heated internal discussion on the subject, the Angels agreed that the alliance should go ahead on the basis that

it could be shown that it would operate in the best interests of the club.

In 1979, following the arrest of thirty-two of their members under the recently introduced Federal Racketeering - Influenced and Corrupt Organisation (R.I.C.O.) legislation, the Angels once again played the role of a political pressure group as a means of defending their civil and constitutional rights. They were supported in their struggle by the A.C.L.U. who employed leading left wing civil rights lawyers to fight the case. In a much publicised statement, 'R.I.C.O. Act - the Rape of Justice', the Angels stated their position as follows:

"CIVIL RIGHTS attorneys inform us that at present there are no 'illegal organisations' in the United States. Individuals may join political parties of any persuasion, ranging from the far left to the extreme right, of the political spectrum. It is not illegal to be a member of the American Bar Association, League of Women Voters, Anti Jewish Defamation League or the American NAZI Party. Membership in these organisations is rightly protected by the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution. That is, the American Government is not permitted to stifle citizens from their freedoms of association or political opinions, however popular or unpopular, or from association with individuals who may share their ideas ...

"While the Hells Angels are not a political party (we think) the attempt to outlaw the Motorcycle Club presents a real threat to the right of Freedom of Association. If the government succeeds in its attempt it will establish a precedent which may then be used to declare illegal other organisations. Once it has been established that the government may declare an organisation to be illegal, there is no way of knowing which organisations the

government will single out and move against next.

"It is no secret that the Hells Angels are not an association which is too popular with mainstream Americans. But, in terms of repression, the government habitually seeks to first direct its attention to groups which are unpopular, hoping that the majority of citizens will not protest simply because the group which is being singled out is not too popular. However, the issue goes beyond the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. It is OUR (YOURS AND MINE) rights and freedoms of association which is being threatened."¹⁹¹

If it is the case that American outlaw motorcycle clubs are overwhelmingly and consciously apolitical, and that the wearing of various forms of Nazi regalia has no symbolic meaning beyond that which is attached to it by those members of the subculture themselves, what then of the incidence of racism implied by the apparent lack of ethnic diversity? Firstly, it must be stated that although motorcycling as a central life interest has never, for a variety of cultural reasons, been an immensely popular activity amongst black youth, there are nevertheless a surprisingly large number of black motorcycle clubs, from touring to outlaw, throughout the United States.

Black outlaw motorcycle clubs with names like the American Bandits, Aliens, Ballbusters, Black Angels, Black Cats, Georgia Bad Boys, Moon Dogs, Rat Patrol etc., etc., etc., have been in existence for more than thirty years and continue to thrive, particularly in California, home of the nation's most populous bike riding public. Black clubs were in fact initially 'outlawed' from necessity rather than choice, an understandable response to the wording of Article 1, Section 1 of the American Motorcycle Association's Competition Rules laying down the official require-

ments for membership of individual riders and clubs, which stated that:

"All riders in A.M.A. sanctioned Competition are required to be members of the Association. Membership limited to white persons only." 192

This clause, although repealed in 1949, continued to influence the attitude of A.M.A. affiliated clubs and race organisers for many years after, leading to the virtual exclusion of non-white competitors and spectators from all A.M.A. sanctioned events. Black bikers had no need to riot in the streets of Hollister in order to demonstrate their unacceptability to the law-abiding ninety-nine per cent of American motorcyclists, they were deemed to be 'one per centers' simply because of the colour of their skin. As the A.M.A. was not only the governing body of motorcycle sport, but also held a jealously guarded monopoly of control over social events large and small throughout the United States, black bikers, whether potential race competitors or recreational custom riders, were forced to organise themselves in defence of their interests.

Being barred from the track meant that black riding activities were, apart from the occasional illegally run off-road drag races, exclusively centred around the street. Denied A.M.A. blessing, black riders were forced into forming their own clubs which, because of the nature of the neighbourhoods from which their memberships were drawn, more often than not bordered on the outlaw model originally brought into being by their poor white contemporaries. From the early days, fully fledged black outlaw clubs like the East Bay Dragons and the Egyptians, both born out of the tough ghettos of downtown Oakland, were very nearly as notorious as those other bike riding anti-heroes the Hells Angels. Charley 'The Good Spade', a former president of the Chicago based Rattlers

M.C., rode with the Angels' Oakland chapter for many years, and there appears to have been little or no friction between black and white clubs beyond the kind of rivalry which is normally engendered as a result of two groups of patch-wearing outlaws inhabiting the same turf. According to Thompson, the Angels' relationship with the Dragons was ambivalent:

"Their colour line was", he says, "strangely gerrymandered, so that individual 'good spades' (were) on one side and the mass of 'crazy niggers' on the other."¹⁹³

Thompson goes on to describe the appearance of the Dragons en masse for a meeting at the Oakland Angels' bar cum clubhouse, the El Adobe:

"The Dragons", he writes, "have the same kind of half-made elan as the Angels, and a group of them wailing down the highway is every bit as spectacular. They wear multicoloured helmets and their bikes area flashy mixture of choppers and garbage waggons - all Harley 74s. The Dragons, like the Angels, are mainly in their twenties and more or less unemployed. Also like the Angels, they have a keen taste for action, violent or otherwise ...

"(On) twenty big chrome-flashing bikes ... (they were) the wildest looking bunch of Negroes I'd ever seen. They rolled in, gunning their engines, and dismounted with such an easy, swaggering confidence that my first impulse was to drop my beer and run ...

"... By the time the Dragons had out their engines, the Angels were greeting them with friendly jibes about 'calling the cops' and 'having you bastards locked up for scaring hell out of the citizens'. Barger shook hands with Lewis, the Dragons' president ... Most of the black outlaws seemed to know the Angels by their first names. Some went into the bar while others drifted

around the parking lot, shaking hands here and there and admiring the bikes. The talk was mainly of motorcycles and although it was pointedly friendly, it was also a bit reserved ...

"The Dragons stayed about an hour, then boomed off to wherever they were going. The Angels didn't invite them to any parties later on, and I had a feeling that both groups were relieved that the visit had come off so smoothly ...

"Sonny (Barger) left early ..., and as he mounted his Sportster in the parking lot I remembered the Dragons and asked why they seemed on such friendly terms with the Angels. 'We're not real close,' he replied, 'and we never will be as long as I'm president. But they're different from most niggers. They're our kind of people.'" ¹⁹⁴

The guarded friendliness which Thompson notes as being displayed by the Angels towards their black visitors and vice versa should not necessarily be taken as indicative of any deep rooted racial tension existing between the two groups. Rather, such an atmosphere of caution is commonly experienced whenever different outlaw clubs meet up with one another on disputed territory. Neither club desires to lose face by appearing overenthusiastic to court the friendship of a potential rival however impressive an entrance they make, but at the same time, neither club wants to lose a potential ally. Such is the established and widely understood formality of relations which exist between clubs at an official level, although day to day contact between individual members will often be much less formalised.

It may well be that Barger himself is a racist, but there is no evidence to show that such an attitude is representative of either the Angels or the outlaw motorcycle subculture as a whole.

Rather, the collective distrust of anybody outside of the immediate club brotherhood, black or white, citizen or cyclist, is routinely displayed on such occasions. In an official police report on the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, a police expert on the bikers is quoted as saying:

"I wouldn't call them 'racists'. Not really. Maybe deep down they are. There ain't no Negro Angels, you notice. But the Angels ain't for anybody, and that makes them anti-Negro and just about anything else." 195

And, in a much more recent television interview, Sandy Alexander, president of the Angels' New York City chapter, summed up the club's response to accusations of racism laid against them in the following words:

"Some guys are racist, but myself I grew up with a lot of black people and I believe deeply that you judge a man by his behaviour and not his colour.

"In actual fact we (the Angels) are the minority race. Only blacks would know what I'm talking about ... People say a nigger is a nigger. A nigger is what people see as the lowest thing on Earth. That's what people look at you as. They think, well look at that nigger, what a low down looking dog. But look at that big black cat (pointing to a huge black biker), he's for real. He spits on people who say something like that. He's like us, he's got pride ... Look the world straight in the eye and you ain't a nigger no matter what colour skin you were born with. .. Show respect you get treated with respect, act like an asshole you get treated like an asshole ...

"Have you noticed that our clubhouse is right in the darker section of town? Have you noticed that? Doesn't it seem strange

that our New York clubhouse is slap bang in the middle of a black neighbourhood? We get no hostility whatever, but the authorities are busy trying to condemn it so we will have to move out" 196

But the fact remains that the Hells Angels, in America at least, while encompassing within their ranks bikers of Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Red Indian and Chinese extraction, have, significantly, no negro members. The explanation for this has much more to do with the voting arrangements for prospective membership laid down in the club rules than any overt policy of racist exclusion. In order to qualify as a prospect, the successful applicant must receive no more than two blackballs at a club meeting. Full-patch members need give no reason for such a rejection, and thus prospective black members are likely to be excluded through being blackballed by the votes of a racist minority of the membership. In practice however, this is exceedingly unlikely to happen because, as is common in the United States, black bikers have an overwhelming tendency to join exclusively black clubs at the outlaw end of the spectrum, and any reform in the Angels' voting pattern would be unlikely to herald a dramatic change in the club's racial composition. When it comes to matters of business, however, the story is somewhat different.

On 16th April 1974, in a major operation, Berkeley and Oakland police raided a local Black Panther headquarters. Among the weapons confiscated were several hundred M.16 United States Army issue semi-automatic rifles, machine-guns and grenade launchers, together with thousands of rounds of ammunition, dealt to the Panthers via a left wing student group by the Hells Angels. And, according to police sources, the Angels have sold stolen weapons to the Panthers on at least half a dozen occasions, establishing

the bikers as by far the largest source of such weapons. There is however no evidence of any connection between the two groups other than of a purely instrumental nature, the Angels merely viewing the black radicals as good paying customers for their wares.

Racist organisations have over the past twenty years made repeated attempts to make inroads into the American biker movement, but have consistently failed to recruit on any meaningful level, either amongst outlaw club members or unaligned bikers. Both the Ku Klux Klan, and to a lesser extent the National Association of White People advertise in the major biker magazines and succeed in selling products like 'White Power' T-shirts to the outlaw fraternity, but as far as involving such customers in any organised way in their respective group activities, they appear to have been wholly unsuccessful. The only right wing body to have made significant inroads is a secretly and well funded organisation known as the Aryan Brotherhood, which proclaims itself as having been formed to 'further the interests of the Aryan peoples of the United States'. The Aryan Brotherhood operates within the United States prison system, organising and working in support of white convicts, and, in the atmosphere of racial tension which characterises American penal establishments, has met with limited success. Incarcerated bikers go to make up only a small percentage of the Aryan Brotherhood's total membership, but are nevertheless significant because, as a group, they are amongst the most cohesive and best organised sections of the prison population. And, as such, their allegiance is much sought after, both in terms of protection and street credibility. The Aryan Brotherhood tends to attract loners rather than club members, who have sufficiently strong attachments on the outside not to need the support that such an organisation has to offer, and in any case have a

a tendency to avoid involvement with outside bodies, particularly those with political overtones. In practice, the Aryan Brotherhood tends to restrict its activities to low level racial abuse enmeshed in a web of Nordic/Viking religious mysticism which serves to give its rantings some form of substance. Bikers, in common with other white prisoners, are more likely to get involved with such an organisation through isolation and boredom rather than any desire to further the cause of white supremacy, and the vast majority of all prison recruits sever connections upon release into the outside world. There is no evidence that the Aryan Brotherhood has succeeded in establishing branches beyond the confines of the American penal system, and absolutely no evidence to suggest that outlaw bikers are proportionately any more racist than other sections of American society.

Neither newspaper archives nor United States police files reveal significant instances of inter-racial conflict having taken place between black and white outlaw motorcycle clubs, and although there have been territorial disputes involving clubs of a differing ethnic make-up, these should be put into the category of normative subcultural internecine friction, rather than overtly racist violence. Indeed, such instances are infinitely more rare than corresponding disputes between all-white or all-black participants, for the reason that both groups, although members of the outlaw motorcycle subculture, have a tendency to operate almost exclusively within the bounds of their respective overarching racial cultures, only coming into direct contact at state or nationwide biker gatherings. Thus, the likelihood of potential racial conflict is significantly minimised.

In August 1969, at the height of America's inter-racial troubles, eastern seaboard newspapers did predict the eruption

of racial violence within the biker subculture as a result of the slaying of a well known figure in biker circles, Robert Hilliard Jr., a.k.a. 'Hitler', president of the all-negro Cleveland based Egyptians Motorcycle Club. The media were keen to lay the blame for Hilliard's murder at the feet of the Egyptian's outlaw neighbours, the Cleveland chapter of the Hells Angels, but it soon transpired the assassins were themselves members of black outlaw clubs, God's Children and the Psycho Syndicate, and the motive for the killing an internal dispute regarding the transferral of the affections of Hilliard's former old lady to one of God's Children.

Perhaps the only other inter-club racial conflict to hit the national headlines occurred in 1977, when the long established and powerful mid-western club, the Bandidos, took exception to the formation of a Dallas, Texas, based club, the African Bandits, not because the Bandits were black, but because of the possible confusion which might ensue through the similarity of names. Billed by the Dallas Police Department as 'a potential warfare situation', the dispute was eventually settled amicably, the Bandits agreeing to change their name in deference to the Bandidos long standing claim on the name. Commented Bandido leader Little Joe:

"It's hard to talk bad to somebody who is doing more good than you can imagine ... We've been talking for five months trying to ease the deal. We don't want to turn it into something it's not, like a racial deal. But people are getting us mixed up and it's causing conflict.

"We don't want people thinking we got all indignant to get a name changed. We're not forcing these people (Bandits) to do this. This is not the '50s where we come out shooting. There's

no winners in a war." 197

Over the past ten years, the black American biker subculture has expanded very considerably, until today, black riders go to make up a significant proportion of the faces at any major biker gathering. Their magazine, Black Biker, mirrors similar publications aimed at white outlaw riders, featuring custom machines, clubs and events, built, peopled and organised by and for black motorcyclists. A loose coalition of black clubs holds an annual run, known as the 'Roundup', for black bikers from all over the country. The Roundup also attracts a fair number of white riders and there is never a hint of trouble, despite the presence of several hundred law enforcement personnel. The 1982 Roundup was hosted by the Denver based club, the Suns of Parkness, and drew some three thousand bikers from Texas, California, Nebraska, Illinois, and Indiana. Coordinator and Suns of Parkness president, Big Nate, commented:

"There's been no problem. This is what biking is all about - freedom ... I know most of these people ... and I know that if they bring somebody around, he's good people.

"There's people here representing everything from cooks to lawyers ... Bikers aren't made, they're born. You ever seen an eagle, seen him soar? Or a hawk, or a dove, anything that has the freedom of the skies? Well, we've got the freedom of the highways ..." 198

The A-Town Easy Riders from Anderson, Indiana, are a typical black outlaw club. Formed in 1973 by veterans of other clubs, the Easy Riders boast a membership of thirty-five and, in conjunction with three associated groups, the Kentuckiana Gun Slingers, the Black Angels and the Black Dragons, form the nucleus

of the powerful Indiana Bikers Association. In an interview with Black Biker, the Easy Riders' president, 'Sweet Charles' Armstrong, outlined his club's attitude:

"Our club is about honesty and fairness, something which you don't find too much of in straight society, and we like the same in return ... We don't set out to terrorise anybody, but the public is still suspicious of us. People watch too much T.V., shows that perpetuate the stereotype of motorcycle riders as evil people. But I wouldn't be here if they (the Easy Riders) were trouble makers. We want people to know we aren't hoodlums. We're trying to build up the community not destroy it, but the public drive by here (the clubhouse) and slap down their car locks. They act like we'd hurt them or something ...

"We plan to do a lot better in the future," says Sweet Charles concerning club membership. "We average about three new members a year ... Prospects must be recommended to club officials by a club member. Next they pay an initiation fee of fifty dollars which entitles them to one club patch and covers one month's dues. They are then put on ninety days probation to see if they have enough dedication to be a good club member. That's if they can stand the pressure ...

"I'm sure we could do a lot better if it wasn't for the city's unemployment situation." Anderson has the highest unemployment rate in the United States. "We would probably be 150 strong in membership if it wasn't for the economy."¹⁹⁹

Black outlaw motorcycle clubs unlike their white counterparts tend to be very politically active, both in their local communities and on a national level. During Jesse Jackson's 1983 campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination, black patch-wearing clubs were much in evidence on security duties, and black bikers

have also been prominently involved in the 'Justice for Jobs' unemployment campaign, their participation much encouraged by Black Biker magazine. When Jackson arrived in Anderson City, Indiana, to lead the annual 'March For Jobs', the Indiana Bikers Association and other clubs, including the A-Town Easy Riders, Kentuckiana Gun Slingers, Black Angels, Black Dragons, Road Knights, Road Huggers, Turning Wheels, Mongols, Rough Riders and Nightriders, worked in liaison with the Anderson City Police Department to provide security for the marchers, transforming the event from a purely localised affair into one that commanded nationwide media coverage. As Black Biker commented:

" The people of the United States WANT to work, including motorcyclists. The organised involvement of the Black motorcycle clubs and individual Black motorcycle riders from several different states shows that the possibility exists for political clout among Black motorcycle clubs ...

"There is no way in the world that we ... can overlook the realities of the world we live in and not tip our helmets to the people who have the guts to use their intelligence for positive and economic change in America. We like to party and ride with the best of them, always will, but at the same time we challenge any motorcyclist or motorcycle club to become involved in building the foundation of America. If we are to survive as a human race, everything we do must be done together, Black and White, in a POSITIVE AND ORGANIZED MANNER, NOW!"²⁰⁰

In Britain, there is no similar history of black participation in the motorcycle subculture and, as New Society has correctly pointed out, it is rare that a black or brown face is seen at a biker gathering, whether of a sporting or social variety. Indeed, it is rare to see a non-white face aboard a motorcycle in any context at all, commuting, business and pleasure riding included.

It would appear that the ethnic minorities eschew the use of two-wheeled transport in favour of four, even in the case of those of Asian extraction, whose relatives on the Indian sub-continent are among the most prolific operators of motorcycles in the world, utilising them in their millions for every conceivable purpose, including family, passenger and goods transport. Here, those same people are much more likely to be seen driving a battered Cortina or a cheap van for similar sorts of purposes. Why is this?

Perhaps, the answer lies in the fact that although motorcycles have formed an integral part of pre-immigrant culture, both in terms of their availability (India is currently the second largest producer of motorcycles in the world after Taiwan) and use value, they are not regarded and have never been regarded as anything more than a menial form of transport, and certainly not something that would form the basis of a social activity to be enjoyed in the company of friends. In India, as in the Caribbean, the indigenous motorcycling population has no significant interest in motorcycles beyond the instrumental, and no aspiring bourgeois or image conscious trendsetter would even consider using one to cut a dash amongst his peers. Of all the multitude of motorcycles seen on the streets, probably only one in a thousand has an engine capacity of more than 125 c.c., high-powered machines being the near exclusive reserve of the armed forces or passing Caucasian tourists. Small wonder then that little interest has been generated amongst the immigrant population in Britain towards the owning of motorcycles for either leisure or sporting purposes, unlike the foibles of Western consumerism which have, in certain sections of the population, elevated the motorcycle to a position of positive veneration.

The same is true of first generation black British youth, who are infinitely more likely to aspire to the ownership of a

car than a motorcycle. This is probably due to the fact that there is no direct link between them and a parent motorcycle owning subculture, as exists within the white British community, where fathers and grandfathers have routinised motorcycling as a legitimate and thoroughly enjoyable form of leisure activity, the motorcycle itself having come to form the central object of an inter-generational focus of subcultural life. Furthermore, the motorcycle has, for more than three decades, enjoyed a universally recognised position as a symbol of rebellion uniquely associated with white Anglo-Saxon teenagers. More often than not, any reference to motorcycling as a non-sporting activity in the news media, includes a liberal sprinkling of well-padded references to those same white participants' penchant for the wearing of unsavoury items of Nazi regalia, the strong implication being that they are, if not card carrying members of the National Front, at the very least Union Jack-waving closet racists who would hardly welcome youthful black recruits.

Rock and roll, the type of music archetypically associated with the motorcycle subculture, has, despite its roots in black rhythm and blues, overwhelmingly white connotations. Its images are white, its messengers are, with a very few exceptions, white, and perhaps, more importantly, its big screen folk heroes, Brando, Fonda, et al, are white skinned and proud of it. Nowhere in the entire public face of the British motorcycle subculture can there be perceived anything other than icons of white masculinity.

Additionally, motorcycle sport has, unlike the vast majority of sporting activities, signally failed to attract either black participants or spectators, with the effect that no consumer market has developed amongst black youth concerned with the acquisition of race-replica

road machines and ancilliary motorcycling paraphernalia.

In spite of the apparent lack of black involvement in the contemporary British motorcycle subculture there is, as we shall see, little or no evidence to suggest that this is indicative of any overtly racist attitude endemic to that subculture. It is certainly true that, in the past, bikers have regularly been portrayed in print and on film as violent, right-wing, swastika-bedecked, racist thugs, but what is the reality which underpins this image? Where and when did it first arise? To answer our questions, we have to go back to the late 1950s, when the teds, the subcultural precursors of the ton-up boys, played a prominent part in the 'race riots' which took place first in Notting Hill Gate, and later in Nottingham and other provincial towns with large immigrant populations. It is, however, a widely held view that the youths involved in such incidents, reprehensible as their behaviour undoubtedly was, were largely unaware of what they were getting themselves into, being manipulated and used as very gullible cannon-fodder by politically sophisticated right wing activists. It should also be born in mind that, in the immediate post-war decade, the only rebellious subcultural style available to white working class youth was the teddy boy style, and therefore any similarly large, rumbustuous public gathering, convened for whatever purpose, would contain within it a fair sprinkling of youth wearing Edwardian drape jackets, drain pipe trousers and boot lace ties. It is therefore a dangerous assumption that, on the one hand, all teddy boys were racist thugs or, on the other hand, that teddy boys held racial attitudes any different from those held by the vast majority of Britain's white working class, young and old alike. And shameful as it is to have to admit it, the image of teddy boys on the nation's television sets physically attacking black immigrants, probably did more to

restore the reputation of Britain's 'juvenile delinquents' in the eyes of their parent community than practically any other single act however charitable or Godly, such was the racist nature of our society at that time.

The other point that must be born in mind is that the teds, in common with other mass working class youth subcultures that have subsequently come into being, revelled in making as public a spectacle of themselves as possible, either singly or collectively, and the greater the attention gained by such an exhibition, the better. It mattered little to them if the occasion was an anti-immigration demonstration, a 24 hour 'jive-in' or the opening night of a rock and roll film, all were seized upon gleefully as opportunities to outrage the older generation, especially when there was a camera crew on hand to record the mayhem. It is therefore highly likely that, whatever the racist attitudes held by some of the individual participants, the vast majority of those involved in the race riots merely went along for the ride, in the same way as the much publicised mods and rockers battles of a decade or so later. There is no evidence whatsoever of any organised or long lasting racist campaign amongst the teds, and it is unlikely that those who found them such willing dupes at the height of the 'troubles' would have wanted, or been encouraged, to hang around for very long afterwards. Not that they needed to hang around, because, as each and every ted attained the age of eligibility for National Service and exchanged his 'DA' for a 'short-back-and-sides', the task of inculcating anti-immigrant, white supremacist views into working class youth could quite safely be left in the hands of the British Army.

If we pass on to the first of the specifically motorcycle orientated subcultures, the ton-up boys, again there is no

evidence to suppose that the leather-clad participants were either more or less racist in outlook than their non-motorcycling contemporaries. Unlike the middle class youth subcultures of the same period, the ton-up boys were not noted for their interest in political affairs. In fact, they appear to have had very little interest in anything beyond the immediate, nightly pursuit of hedonistic pleasures concerned with speed or sexual conquest.

Much the same can be said of the rockers, who were more concerned with conducting a planned campaign of prejudice and stage-managed violence against their white subcultural enemies, the mods, than they were with any group intervention in politics. It was left to the mods, and in particular their latter day offshoots, the skinheads, to self-consciously align themselves with the policies of the right and set about waging a race war on the streets of the nation.

It should not be imagined however that the rockers were any the less racist in outlook than the mass of their white working class contemporaries, as Dr. Paul Willis in a series of interviews conducted in the mid-1960s has revealed. Willis writes that the "motor-bike boys frequently spoke of immigrant groups as if they were sub-human. This," he says, "was a typical view of Asians:

"Fred: Fucking dirty black bastards, they're all filthy, you know, you can see 'em on our job (Fred was a scaffolder on a building site) with their fucking teeth all green, and they start yacking to their mates, and looking at you ... what's they saying about me.

"West Indians generally came off only slightly better:

"Joe: Anyway, as I said, it's a shame they can't help it, what they are ... you go past a Jamaican's home, say, with a

a big party on, the records are nice, the music must send them mad because it sends me mad, they go out in the street and they see a white bird walk past and they go 'Hello, darling' (imitating a Jamaican accent), and that's filthy isn't it ... we don't do that do we?²⁰¹

Willis equates the rockers' view of immigrants as sub-human with their idealisation of their own masculinity, masculinity defined by the wider society as delinquent, and as a consequence staunchly defended by those involved. "Unpleasant as it is," says Willis, "this dehumanisation of other racial groups must be understood partly as an extension of the same kind of feeling that (the rockers) had for other out-groups, such as drug-pushers and mods. In all these cases there was the same dismissive derision, the same violent dislike expressed with an incisive abuse. The extra feeling behind their racial attitudes can best be understood by appreciating ... their special masculine style.

"The new racial groups of the urban environment posed a kind of threat to the commonsense establishment of their world. The dark aliens, the strange habits, the strange foods, all spoke of a very different way of life, a very different way of understanding life, a very different way of being-in-the-world. Too close a contact, or too imaginative an attempt to understand, may have contaminated them with an importation of some of these strange definitions into their own life-style. This would have undercut some of the solidity of their own world. This is not to attribute to the motor-bike boys any analytic thoughts of this kind ... However, if one understands the absolute solidity, the absolute straightforwardness, of the motor-bike world, it is easy to see that a necessary part of their belief system was ... the denial of other realities. If there were other kinds of worlds, then theirs might not be the authentic one. The solidity of things,

which was not simply a belief, but a style and a way of having an incontrovertible identity in the world, might be challenged ...

"The strange qualities of coloured people, by threatening security, also threatened masculinity because that security was expressed and maintained in a masculine style. If there were any other ways of living, then there were other ways of being masculine. These could be better. The terrible proof of this was the conquest by a black man of a white girl ... This kind of concern is ironic in the light of the particularly rough, and innuendo-laden, approached that the motor-bike boys themselves made to women. However, it is all the more understandable when one appreciates that, for the motor-bike boys, here was a strange group, full of potential threat, apparently actually challenging them on their own ground, in the terms of their own style ..."²⁰²

Whilst I would largely agree with Willis's analysis of the 'motor-bike boys' evinced racism as stemming centrally from a perceived challenge to their concept of masculinity from the incursors of the black immigrant community, I would however argue that such an attitude was scarcely peculiar to rockers, but existed, and to a large extent still exists, within all white working class youth subcultures. It is my contention that, had Willis extended his research to include the rockers' contemporaries - mods, skinheads, etc. - he would have elicited much the same, or an even more extreme response, moreso because the specific form of masculinity embodied within those subcultures, as exemplified by certain styles of music and dress, had a far greater affinity with that of black youth, and thus a far greater potential for conflict. Leather-clad rocker birds were hardly likely to take up with a smooth-talking Jamaican stud, and rock didn't even remotely resemble bluebeat in either musical form or content. In every

aspect, the subculture of Willis's motor-bike boys was far removed from that of black inner-city youth and, in spite of the very racist nature of the comments, it is extremely unlikely that words would have been translated into action.

But, if the rockers exhibited a streak of racism in their make-up, then the arrival on the two-wheeled subcultural scene of their successors, the outlaw bikers, replete with chrome German helmets and swastikas, did little to allay suspicion. Paradoxically though, despite manifesting all the outward appearance of fascist stormtroopers, the outlaws were far less hidebound by the strictures of working class conservatism than their subcultural predecessors. Their stylistic form, their masculinity, had moulded itself during the turbulent years of the late sixties, and brought with it a very different set of values. At the outset, they tended to mix quite freely with the black community, sharing a common interest in the consumption of marijuana in large quantities, unlike the puritanical rockers who detested drugs and all who propagated their usage. This predilection for the pleasures of smoking marijuana routinely brought them into contact with black youth, contact which by its very nature demanded a high degree of mutual confidence and confidentiality. So too, their deeply felt hostility towards the police and their often violent antagonism towards the subcultural bearers of white supremacy, the skinheads, added to the outlaws' sense of empathy with other out-groups. It was therefore a not at all uncommon sight to see a line of choppers parked up outside a pub from whose depths emanated the drubbing beat of a West Indian reggae band.

Drawn from a wider class base than the overwhelmingly inner-city white manual working class world of the rockers, the outlaws tended to be less parochial and less blinkered than their

predecessors. They owed their politics more to the somewhat confused tenets of hippie radicalism than they did to working class conservatism and whilst one of their favourite patches might well have read 'I Ain't Prejudiced I Hate Everybody', they were nevertheless possessed of a libertarianism which would have made many a rocker cringe. While the old soldiers and the middle class arbiters of social nicety threw their hands up in horror at the outlaws deliberate flaunting of the trappings of fascism, the average black man in the street cared not one iota.

True, not too many black or brown faces appeared aboard bikes, but neither is there any evidence of any active discouragement from the white participants. Then, as now, the motorcycle was not viewed as an object of subcultural importance within a black community who had not the slightest interest in two wheeled transport even on the most instrumental of levels, unlike their black American cousins who shared in the white man's enthusiasm for the relatively cheap speed and thrills that the motorcycle had to offer. In Britain, the West Indian, and to an extent the Asian, male were more than content to cruise the streets in their hotted up custom cars, while the crazy white boys got wet and cold on 'uncool' motorcycles.

Today, as New Society correctly observes, the British biker subculture is almost overwhelmingly white faced. Nevertheless, it is my strong contention that, unlike virtually all other contemporary white, predominantly working class indigenous subcultures, for whom the active persecution of racial minorities has come to assume a central plank of group identity and cohesion, the racial imbalance which characterises the biker subculture owes its existence largely to the fact that black youth do not as a general rule desire to ride motorcycles in any capacity, and are therefore extremely unlikely to aspire to membership of the

outlaw end of the spectrum.

No doubt the sight and sound of a large and perhaps unruly gathering of chrome studded, leather-clad white youths, riding noisily through a black neighbourhood or lounging outside a roadside pub, would give a passing Asian or West Indian cause for concern, but there is absolutely no evidence to suggest that such forms of 'intimidation', regrettable through they might be, are anything more than accidental, owing more to the stereotypical image propagated by the media, New Society included, than to any intentional malevolence on the part of the bikers themselves. There is no record of bikers' involvement in incidences of racial conflict in the British Isles during the past twenty years and, on the contrary, there is every indication that such behaviour would be subject to extremely strong peer group disapproval were it to arise in the future. Indeed, when, in the late 1970s, a newly formed South-East London outlaw club, the Rebels, openly declared themselves to be anti-immigrant affiliates of both the British Movement and the Ku Klux Klan, they received very short shrift from the local biker community who beat them up on a run and forced them to disband within a few months.

The Motorcycle Action Group, by far the most radical and most outspoken of the pressure groups representing bikers' interests, and coincidentally the political voice of the outlaw end of the spectrum, has consistently set its face against the emergence of racism within its ranks, particularly so in the wake of the controversial 1975 Sikh exemption amendment to the compulsory wearing of crash helmets law, the passing of which resulted in a considerable degree of pressure being exerted on the organisation from right wing non-motorcycling quarters to campaign for the repeal of the law as a whole on the grounds of anti-white racial

discrimination, pressure which was vociferously resisted. M.A.G. has consistently consulted with representatives of the Sikh community on how best to tackle the problem without causing offence, and there are currently two leading Sikhs who hold honorary positions on the M.A.G. National Committee, one of whom served four terms of imprisonment as a result of his refusal to wear a helmet and was subsequently awarded the much coveted M.A.G. Freedom Award in recognition of his sacrifice. One area M.A.G. group which did decide independently to go ahead with an anti-helmet protest run, dubbed the 'Turban Run', in the course of which riders removed their helmets and wound various forms of makeshift turban around their heads as a challenge to police to prosecute, resulted in a massive display of disapproval from the rest of the membership and myriad letters of condemnation appearing in the motorcycling press. No such demonstration has since been held, and any MAG member wishing to pursue similar tactics must first agree to publicly disassociate his actions from the policy of the organisation.

As far as British outlaw motorcycle clubs are concerned, again the membership is overwhelmingly, although not exclusively, white. Whilst it would be naive to suppose that such clubs do not contain within their ranks a proportion of members with right wing racist views, it is equally true to say that this proportion is probably no greater than that present within any other randomly selected group in white society. The outlaw clubs, as previously noted, place great emphasis upon their apoliticism and, collectively at least, are anxious to distance themselves as far as possible from association with political groupings of either the right or the left. So much so, that it is rare indeed to see members of patch-wearing clubs sporting items of Nazi regalia similar to that worn by non-aligned bikers farther down the subcultural career

ladder. And, whilst many of the individuals concerned have, undeniably, deeply held political convictions of one variety or another, they always take a secondary position to the interests of the club and are seldom, if ever, aired in public.

Although there are no exclusively black outlaw clubs in Britain, many clubs, the Hells Angels included have, or have had, black full-patch members. For a number of years, the membership of the Kent chapter included a Sikh Angel known as Bick, a founder member of the club in England and a virulent anti-racist who was inclined to physically attack anybody who made references of a derogatory nature about his colour. And the renegade Windsor chapter, often violently opposed to almost anybody outside the club, black or white, has recently had occasion to publicly defend its anti-racist stance in court following the death in police custody of its only black member, John 'Black John' Mikkleson. Such hardcore black outlaws, though rare, are by no means exceptional, and indeed probably outnumber in total ordinary black motorcyclists on the streets of Britain, and a surprisingly large contingent turned out to pay their last respects alongside the Angels at Mikkleson's funeral, much to the apparent consternation of Windsor police.

Unlike the vast majority of white outlaw club recruits however, black members generally do not have long standing patterns of involvement with motorcycling prior to making the acquaintance of their subcultural mentors, and have a tendency to take up biking as a central life interest only as a consequence. Inevitably, many obstacles will be put in their path if they decide to aspire to full club membership, not only from white racists within the club concerned, but also from their non-motorcycling black peers who, given the hostile publicity which exists concerning the political leanings of such bodies, are hardly likely to

proffer encouragement. However, once formally accepted into the club as a prospect, the black candidate will, as a point of honour, be treated no differently from any of his fellow prospects, whatever the private views of individual full-patch members, such is the high degree of respect accorded to the wearer of a club patch, surpassing as it does all feelings of antipathy, personal, political or racial. In Mikkleson's case, there is seething resentment amongst the England Angels regarding the circumstances and cause of his death, and woe betide anybody inside or outside the club who voices comments of a racist nature in their hearing. It is not of course contended that either the Hells Angels or other British outlaw motorcycle clubs are to be found in the vanguard of any orchestrated anti-racist campaign, merely that, in so far as the club itself is concerned, internal affairs are conducted with an egalitarianism that would do credit to many an avowedly anti-racist organisation in the wider society.

It is to South Africa and New Zealand that we should turn to examine the only other examples of a flourishing black outlaw motorcycle subculture outside the United States. And, it is South Africa in particular, a nation torn asunder by racial strife, which, as far as its native biker population is concerned, provides us with some real surprises. As previously noted, South Africa has a thriving motorcycling community which, because of the all year round riding weather, has a higher than average proportion of participants for whom the motorcycle has come to represent something far more than just ride to work commuter transport. That in itself is hardly surprising given the relative affluence of white South African society, but what is of significance however is that in spite of all legal and social barriers erected to prevent racially mixed activities, the outlaw biking community is almost uncompromisingly multi-racial in composition.

Both of the major annual events of the South African biking calendar, the Buffalo and Rhino rallies, attract many thousands of enthusiasts, white and black alike, and whilst they have in recent years been marred by wild behaviour resulting in widespread and massively adverse publicity, there appears to have been no racial element involved in the trouble. In fact, it is this very lack of racial tension within the outlaw subculture which has attracted the attention of South African churchmen and politicians, far more so than the common and garden lawlessness which characterises such gatherings. Outspoken Baptist pastor Francois Coertze, in an interview with the Johannesburg Sunday Tribune slammed the multi-racial miscreants as 'irresponsible and wicked', going on to say that:

"As a minister of God and as one who must speak up against the evils of the day, I am compelled to make my views known."²⁰³

Predictably, Pastor Coertze's views were virulently anti-biker.

David Basckin, a psychologist at the University of Natal, attempted to explain the unusual degree of racial tolerance exhibited by the bikers, "It has," he said, "a lot to do with the class structure of the participants.

"These men (the bikers) form a segment of the alienated white working class. Some of them ... face redundancy through the unexpected obsolescence of their skills. Others ... are balanced on the cutting edge of black advancement. As the past beneficiaries of the job protection racket, they are soon to feel the force of massive competition for jobs as the inevitable pressure of history bears down upon white privilege.

"The suddenness of change leaves them anxious, confused and alone ... in a word; alienated. The rationale behind the process

of change has been hidden from them all their lives, leaving them unable to understand or participate. I think the bikers ... are a manifestation of this feeling of powerlessness. Without power as persons, they manifest power through bikes, guns, knives, and bizarre costumes. Unaware of the causes of their agony, they turn their aggression upon themselves destroying their bodies and their machines in a crazed auto-de-fe of accidents and chaotic drinking. Grasping at dreams to liberate themselves from their alienation, they mimic the romantic individualism of the archetypes of our civilisation ..."²⁰⁴

Alienated and powerless they may well be, but the bikers by rejecting, albeit unconsciously, the most sacred doctrines of the apartheid system, can hardly be accused of mimicking the romantic individualism of the archetypes of South African civilisation, whatever Basckin takes the term 'civilisation' to mean in the context of that particular nation. For reasons of their own, the bikers have chosen to adopt a very different strategy from that of the mass of the white unskilled and semi-skilled South African population when faced with the 'inevitable pressure of history'. True, they probably don't understand what Basckin describes as 'the rationale behind the process of change', but nevertheless, they appear to be far less 'anxious and confused' than the majority of their white contemporaries. And, if they stand 'alone and alienated', condemned - not to say teargassed, beaten, persecuted and imprisoned by the white South African authorities - for their actions, then they have placed themselves fairly and squarely in the enemy camp, not necessarily as an act of political protest, but as a material fact. These alienated rejects from the urban white working class have, of their own volition, placed themselves in a similar structural position vis-a-vis the South African state to that of the dispossessed urban blacks, and they show absolutely

no sign of returning quietly to the fold.

Johannesburg itself boasts three fully pledged patch-wearing outlaw clubs - the Breeds, the Stopchildren and the Flying Brothers - all have a multiracial membership, all are involved in 'charity work in depressed communities', and all are branded as 'criminal gangs' by the police. A recent interview in the Rand Daily Mail with Breeds president Johnny Wing Law, elicited the following:

"Coloureds, Indians and Whites, as long as you ride a bike you can join ...

"We don't exactly know who we're for - except ourselves - but we sure as hell know who we're against. We're all poor, all we've got is our bikes and ourselves. We know what's going on and we look after each other.

"When we collect money for charity it bloody annoys me when the fat-cats have the audacity to wave their credit cards at us. It's the poor, coloured and blacks who give ... It's the bosses who are causing the hassles. Ever seen a poor boss? I mean look at Harry Oppenheimer ...

"The authorities want to wipe us off the map. We are a pretty passive crowd as long as people leave us alone. If they don't, we will push back - twice as hard."²⁰⁵

Neither is the phenomenon of the outlaw motorcycle club exclusive to white or mixed race suburbs, the black townships too boast their own home-grown versions of the Hells Angels. When the Soweto Hawks Bikers' Club first hit the streets early in 1982, their presence was greeted with a display of public hostility every bit as strong as that meted out to their white compatriots. According to the Soweto News:

"The residents ... are stunned that the craze has finally dawned in the township. They see the bikers in the white suburbs and have regarded it as 'madness'... There are those who think this game is risky and feel that lives will be lost in the near future.

"Ms Sthabile Mkhakela did not like the bikers when she first saw them in Soweto. 'They were making a hell of a noise and I could not study'...

"'But,' said Sydney Mahlanga, the Hawk's secretary and public relations officer: 'We won't allow our members to terrorise residents and we appeal to those who have been harassed to take down the registration numbers and report them to us. We will take disciplinary action.'" 206

It would appear that if you're a biker in South Africa, whatever the colour of your skin, you just can't win!

But if South Africa provides us with an example of the ubiquity of the motorcycle subculture, then it is New Zealand that must surely represent the apex of black involvement. There, by far the majority of both clubs and participants are of Maori and Polynesian extraction, their loyalties about evenly divided between a violent dislike for each other and a collective hatred of the 'pakehas' (white New Zealanders). Doctors Jane Kelsey and Warren Young of the Institute of Criminology, Victoria University of Wellington, summed up the rise of these ethnic 'gangs' in a report on the 'problem' for the New Zealand government:

"Late in the 1960s," they write, "motorcycle gangs like the Hells Angels, Highway 61 and the Gypsy Rogues rose to prominence, and many of these have persisted until the present time.

"It was not until the end of the 1960s and early 1970s, however,

that the gangs who now dominate the scene - primarily the Black Power, the Headhunters, the Stormtroopers and the Mongrel Mob - came to public notice. They were not a totally new development, since their origins went back several years ... The rise of these 'ethnic' gangs ..., however, marked the beginnings of a new phase in gang activities. At first, they were viewed largely as another example of the patterns established by the existing bikies (bikers) and Bodgies (rockers) of the earlier generation. While exhibiting anti-social behaviour and requiring the constant attention of law enforcement agencies, they were nevertheless to be seen as a passing phenomenon - another fad in the cycle of youth sub-cultures. But, during 1978, things began to change. These groups seemed to become an uglier and more volatile threat, and to be less controllable by the normal police and criminal justice processes.

"A number of changes which appeared to have taken place within the structure and make-up of gangs were felt to account for this. Firstly, the gangs were changing from loose-knit and localised to compact and cohesive national organisations, with strong leaders to influence and guide them. They were seen to attract, and actively recruit, a growing membership ... The gangs themselves ... appeared to be stronger and more stable entities, presenting a larger and more permanent problem requiring long term solutions. Secondly, accompanying this change in organisation was a perceived increase in open hostility and aggression. The eruption of inter-gang rivalry of unprecedented intensity, fostered by deep personal antagonism between some gangs against others, were reported by the police and media ... (Not) only were the numbers growing, but the behaviour of the gangs was reaching more serious and sinister proportions. Thirdly, this expansion of gang activity seemed to attract its support predominantly from the ranks of young Maoris ... At a time of growing racial disharmony, there was a very real

fear that the 'gang problem' could turn into a racial problem, and that the gangs might be manipulated by a rising corps of black radicals ..."²⁰⁷

Although these clubs share a common generic derivation with outlaw motorcycle clubs worldwide - the participants wear full sets of back patches and affect the style of dress generally associated with outlaw bikers - they have, over time, developed into a substantially different entity, in so far as they have come to assume an organisational model more akin to the archetypical ethnic New York street gang than to the tightly-knit Hells Angels type format. The motorcycle itself, although still widely utilised as transport, no longer occupies a crucial position of subcultural importance, and indeed in some clubs does not even constitute a requirement for membership. The membership itself is accordingly far broader based, being open to virtually anybody, of whatever age or sex, prepared to pledge their allegiance to the aims and principles of the club concerned. There is no prospect period as such, new members being inducted into the club via informal contact with members of whichever chapter happens to hold sway in their locality. Membership is therefore of a much more transitory nature, participants coming and going as they wish and, on occasions, switching loyalties to a rival club, something normally unheard of amongst outlaw motorcycle clubs. Owing to the relative paucity of formal rules regulating the conduct of members, such clubs have a tendency to rely heavily on traditional tribal Maori symbolism and value structures to ensure group cohesion, tailored where necessary to suit the very different conditions of modern urban life.

Club members see themselves as being in the forefront of the struggle for minority rights and despise their elders for having

surrendered their Maori heritage to the pakehas. In a society in which non-white youth have increasingly found themselves on the receiving end of economic decline, the social and political advantages afforded by club membership are manifold and obvious. What is strange, however, is that these disaffected Maori youth have chosen to appropriate what is commonly held to be a uniquely white subcultural form in order to articulate their response. Nonetheless, appropriate it they have, and on a scale which, proportionately speaking, dwarfs such participation anywhere else in the world.

Clubs like the Mongrel Mob, so named because of a court case in 1956 in which two Maori brothers were called a 'pack of mongrels' by the sentencing magistrate, have a total membership running into several hundreds, divided into numerous constituent, and largely, autonomous chapters. But, despite the hard political line which underpins club membership, territorial disputes are exceedingly common, and violent confrontations between clubs accounts for a disproportionately large slice of New Zealand's juvenile crime figures. So much so that, in late 1979, a Parliamentary Internal Affairs Select Committee was set up to 'consider the incidence and causes of violent offending in New Zealand', with specific reference to violence amongst 'ethnic gangs', in the course of which Mete Thomas, a leading member of the Auckland based Black Power, gave the committee his opinion of the reasons for club membership:

"Gangs", he said, "are very much a part of city life ... The reasons for joining are unlimited, but for most are centred on the need to belong, a sense of security for some and a spirit of warriorism for others.

"But the gang not only caters for warriorism, it has an important communal function. It provides security in the harsh

realities of city life, something countless do-gooders have failed to do.

"Society, I feel, must be tolerant and ready to accept the fact that gangs are very much a part of the positive city life of New Zealand."²⁰⁸

According to the report, there were at least fifty-seven 'ethnic gangs' operating in New Zealand, with a conservatively estimated membership of fifteen hundred. And, concerned as they were about the situation, the committee nevertheless recognised that:

"Gangs (were) developing naturally in New Zealand's social structure, and they will always probably exist since they arise from a particular set of social and economic conditions."²⁰⁹

Despite the many recommendations made by the committee, aimed at reintegrating wayward Maori youth, the New Zealand government appears to have become resigned to the fact that, barring a major economic upturn, such 'gangs' will continue to thrive, and they have therefore tended to concentrate their energies on minimising the sort of internecine conflict which accounts for the major part of 'gang related violence'.

Today, there are a variety of government funded programmes in operation designed to provide alternative forms of 'constructive outlets for gang members', but they have met with little success, and the numbers of Maori youth involved grows larger every year. As the 'gangs' grow, however, a process of diffusion and diversification is beginning to take place and, as previously noted, they are drifting farther and farther away from their origins as motorcycle orientated outlaw clubs, with the effect that there has been a rapid escalation in conflict between these ethnic clubs

and the older established outlaw clubs, like the Hells Angels and the Highway 61, who continue to cling to the small, tightly-knit organisational model, regarding themselves primarily as bikers, and fighting shy of any overt involvement in politics. Thus, an increasingly serious schism has developed between the two, by now quite distinct groupings. This schism has not been drawn along racial lines - ninety per cent or more of outlaw motorcycle club members are themselves of Maori extraction - but has come about as a result of the larger, more diffuse grouping's rejection of the traditional core values of the motorcycle subculture in favour of an excursion into the wider socio-political arena. It remains to be seen what will happen in the future, but indications are that the 'ethnic gangs' will continue to diversify to the point where they cease to identify themselves with, or be identified by others as, part of the New Zealand motorcycle subculture, and will eventually merge completely into Maori culture.

Nevertheless, the New Zealand example, alongside the others given, does serve to dismiss the claims of the uninformed that the outlaw motorcycle subculture is the exclusive preserve of the white Anglo-Saxon race, and that non-Union Jack waving black and brown converts elsewhere in the world have played, and continue to play, an important part in both its past development and contemporary make-up. And, as the motorcycle in its guise as a leisure related object, progressively finds its way into the consumer markets of the developing countries, there is every indication that the ethnic diversity of the participants in the biker subculture will continue to grow. Indeed the Hells Angels have recently formed a charter in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and currently boast a hangaround club in Japan, where incidently, there has been a large and very active native outlaw biker population - the Bosozoku - for a number of years.

New Society? Who the hell are they?

CHAPTER XVIII BIKERS AND CRIME - A QUESTION OF INTERPRETATION

"Law enforcement agencies are facing a serious problem in combatting the criminal activities of outlaw motorcycle gangs. In recent years, these activities have increasingly taken on the characteristics of traditional organised crime. Testimony by law enforcement personnel has described outlaw gang involvement in narcotics trafficking, gun smuggling, extortion, witness intimidation, and murder.

"Statewide programs for combatting outlaw motorcycle gangs have suffered from lack of direction and commitment. Scant consideration has been given to disciplined collection, correlation, analysis and dissemination of information to higher level decision-makers and field investigators. It has literally required a series of abhorrent criminal acts on the part of these outlaw gangs to rekindle an interest in developing a disciplined approach toward investigating these groups.

"The Hells Angels motorcycle gang is of particular concern to law enforcement and is emulated by other motorcycle groups. Through their criminal actions, the Hells Angels show that they are willing to risk death or imprisonment in committing homicides directed at police or private citizens. Evidentiary materials reveal that the group possesses an intelligence and counter-intelligence capability equal to those of some law enforcement agencies and superior to many others. When arrested, suspects appear to have access to substantial funds for posting large amounts of bail."²¹⁰

Outlaw Motorcycle Gangs - Report of
the Californian Organised Crime Control
Commission, January 1979.

TODAY I'M AFTER THE HELLS ANGELS.

TOMORROW IT COULD BE YOU.

"This is the land of the free ... unless you're a Hells Angel!"

Since 1978, the Federal Government has begun a calculated systematic attempt to disband the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club through the selective prosecution of its members.

These actions represent an open violation of Fundamental Freedoms guaranteed to all citizens of this country by the First Amendment's protection of Freedom of Association, and life style.

As an example of the government's tactics - several of our Brothers were held in jail in California with bonds ranging from \$750,000 to \$1,000,000, during two separate trials, one lasting nine months and the other six months. In each the jurors had voted nine to three for NOT guilty.

The legal costs of defending these Brothers were staggering. Today, the systematic persecution of Hells Angels continues all across the country, and the government has begun now to try the same thing with other clubs.

Where will the government draw the line on who it prosecutes next? We need your help in the fight for all our freedoms. Help us - help yourselves. Send whatever you can to: Defense Fund, P.O. Box 10071, Collinwood Station, Cleveland, Ohio 44110. Include a self-addressed stamped envelope and you'll receive a 'Keep America Free - Support Your Local Hells Angels' bumper sticker.

IF THEY CAN DO IT TO US.

THEY CAN DO IT TO YOU.²¹¹

Hells Angels Defence Fund Appeal,

Easyriders magazine, June 1983

Sonny Barger:

"The Hells Angels is just a group of people that get together to ride motorcycles and have fun, go to parties and do whatever ..."

Federal Prosecuting Counsel:

"It's that 'whatever' that may be the problem."

Sonny Barger:

"Yeah ... well, what I'm just getting at is because certain people in the Hells Angels have committed crimes in the past does not make the organisation a criminal organisation."²¹²

Transcript of 1st Hells Angels
R.I.C.O. trial July, 1980

On December 6th, 1979, at the 1st Session of the 96th Congress of the House of Representatives, the burning topic which faced the assembled gathering was this: whether or not Congress should recommend that the President of the United States authorise the establishment of a Federal strike force and an organised programme of operations in each judicial district throughout the nation to 'investigate and prosecute crimes committed by members of outlaw motorcycle gangs.'

Republican Congressman Walker, an acknowledged 'hard man' on law and order and initiator of the recommendation, together with a dozen other conservative politicians, including the redoubtable Barry Goldwater, hammered home the urgent need for the government to take positive steps to tackle the problem of organised crime which, in election year, had once again assumed a position of importance in the public campaign to persuade the voters which of the two parties vying for success in the polls was best fitted to clean up America's own back yard. Successive U.S. governments, Republican and Democrat had, in the course of

previous election campaigns, made precisely the same sorts of promises to tackle the 'organised crime problem', but all, with the sterling exception of the Nixon administration, had lacked the resolve while in office, and even Nixon, the Republican 'crime-buster', had been caught with his hand in the till.

Once again, the right demanded action; action which would be seen by the electorate to be decisive and hard-hitting; action which would bring results without encountering the kind of opposition from big business, ethnic voting blocks, union bosses, police chiefs and city politicians, which had hitherto succeeded in thwarting all attempts to get to grips with the high-powered, billion-dollar corruption, seemingly endemic to the American way of life. The target for this action had to be achievable. It had to demonstrate to the American people that the incoming Reagan Government would get out there and take care of business, or at any rate be seen to be getting out there and be taking care of business. The target was not the Mafia, or one of the other traditional crime families, whose previously unsuccessful prosecutions had so embarrassed the Federal authorities, it was those other bogey-men of contemporary American culture, the ones without the powerful friends and the political contacts, the outlaw bikers.

The Democrats, anxious not to be seen by the electorate to be defending the indefensible, echoed the Republicans' fears, and House Concurrent Resolution 220 was duly approved and referred to the House Committee on the Congressional Judicial Sub-Committee on Crime to put into practice. Resolution 220 reads as follows:

"Expressing the sense of the Congress that the President should establish a Federal strike force and a program

in each United States judicial district to investigate and prosecute crimes committed by members of outlaw motorcycle gangs.

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs have become a major criminal element in our society; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs are united in an organized international criminal association with a single network of leaders; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs, as organized criminal groups, have employed terrorism, extortion, threats, and murder as methods of attaining illegal gains; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs, as organized criminal groups, are involved in kidnapping, enslavement, and physical abuse of women; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs, as organized criminal groups, are receiving enormous profits from drug-production, drug-trafficking, gun-running, theft, and murder by contract; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs have systematically abused public welfare programs for personal gain; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gangs have used their illegally gained profits to take control of legitimate business enterprises and to drive lawful business owners out of business; and

Whereas outlaw motorcycle gang members, through their size, power, and ability to cross State boundaries, pose formidable and overwhelming problems for local and State law enforcement officials; and

Whereas an immediate effort must be made on the Federal level to recognize outlaw motorcycle gangs as an organized criminal threat throughout the United States;

and

Whereas the President and the Attorney General have the authority to coordinate the national fight against organised crime: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That the President -

(1) should establish a Federal strike force to investigate Federal crimes committed by members of outlaw motorcycle gangs, to prosecute members of outlaw motorcycle gangs who commit such crimes, and to assist State and local law enforcement agencies in the investigation and prosecution of members of outlaw motorcycle gangs; and

(2) should implement a program in each judicial district of the United States to investigate Federal crimes committed by members of outlaw motorcycle gangs and to prosecute members committing such crimes."²¹³

Since the early 1960s, the authorities of the State of California had virtually declared 'open season' on the Hells Angels. The publication of the Lynch Report in 1965 was the start of an organised campaign which seventeen years later would give the club the biggest fight of its life.

On October 31st, 1972, Californian Attorney General Freville J. Younger issued what he described as a 'far-reaching report on organised crime in California'. Whilst noting criminal activity ranging from Chinese street gangs to bookmaking, Younger called for particular vigilance against the Hells Angels who, he claimed, 'were rapidly becoming large-scale organised crime operators'. Younger further suggested that law enforcement departments intensify their efforts to put club president Sonny Barger behind bars.

Less than twelve months later, Barger was convicted after a controversial trial on minor drug charges, which earned him a lengthy sentence in Folsom prison. The Angels reacted by initiating a nationwide 'Free Sonny Barger' campaign, which gained support from the unlikeliest sections of the American population. Club members were vehement in their assertion that Barger had been 'set up' by the authorities in order to destroy the Hells Angels:

"They've been holding that man illegally ... The judge picked out the jury. The only case in the whole of the United States where the judge picked out the Goddam jury. I was there and it was the most prejudiced damn thing I've ever seen in my life ..."²¹⁴

"To me he's kind of a political prisoner ... What he was busted for you could walk out of court if you were anyone else without even a problem."²¹⁵

"He's going to do his time on not only what they got him charged with, he's going to do time on what everybody thinks he did ..."²¹⁶

September 1977: Barger is released from Folsom to a hero's welcome and returns to head a by now much more politicised Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. The circumstances of his conviction and imprisonment had strengthened rather than, as Attorney General Younger had hoped, weakened the club. Other, previously unfriendly outlaw clubs, together with many hundreds of thousands of unaligned bikers worldwide saw him in the role of a martyr engaged in a struggle against the United States government on their behalf, a notion which served to consolidate the position of the Hells Angels as the elite of the subculture, further infuriating the authorities.

October 1976: In Sacramento, California, law enforcement officials hold a press conference to alert legislators to the dangers of 'so-called outlaw motorcycle gangs'. At the top of their hit list are the 'increasingly notorious' Hells Angels, "whose alleged involvement in organised crime and violence have made them a major target in the current statewide campaign."²¹⁷

September 1978: Attorney General Younger is pursuing an aggressive campaign for the governorship of California, based on what he points to as his long term effort to tackle the problem of organised crime, which he maintains includes such "primary militants as the Hells Angels and other outlaw motorcycle gangs."²¹⁸

January 1979: the Hells Angels file a civil rights suit against various counties, cities and law enforcement departments. The basis of this suit is that "Governmental entities and its officers are attempting to destroy the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club by 'detaining, arresting and searching members or associates of the Club solely because they are associated with the Hells Angels.'" ²¹⁹

June 13th, 1979: Federal prosecutors put the final touches to their plans to prosecute the Hells Angels on alleged violations of federal racketeering and conspiracy laws (United States Code, Title 18, Section 1962) - the R.I.C.O. (Racketeering Influenced and Corrupt Organisations) Act, which states as follows:

(a) It shall be unlawful for any person who has received any income derived, directly or indirectly, from a pattern of racketeering activity or through collection of an unlawful debt in which such person has participated as a principal within the meaning of section 2, title 18, United States Code (U.S.C.S.2).

to use or invest, directly or indirectly, any part of such income, or the proceeds of such income, in acquisition of any interest in, or the establishment or operation of, any enterprise which it engages in, or the activities of which effect, interstate or foreign commerce. A purchase of securities on the open market for purposes of investment, and without the intention of controlling or participating in the control of the issuer, or of assisting another to do so, shall not be unlawful under this subsection if the securities of the issuer held by the purchaser, the members of his immediate family, and his or their accomplices in any pattern of racketeering activity or the collection of an unlawful debt after such purchases do not amount in the aggregate to one percent of the outstanding securities of any one class, and do not confer, either in law or in fact, the power to elect one or more directors of the issuer.

(b) It shall be unlawful for any person through a pattern of racketeering activity or through collection of an unlawful debt to acquire or maintain, directly or indirectly, any interest in or control of any enterprise which is engaged in, or the activities of which affect, interstate or foreign commerce.

(c) It shall be unlawful for any person employed by or associated with any enterprise engaged in, or the activities of which affect, interstate or foreign commerce, to conduct or participate, directly or indirectly, in the conduct of such enterprise's affairs through a pattern or racketeering activity or collection of unlawful debt.

(d) It shall be unlawful for any person to conspire to violate any of the provisions of subsections (a), (b) or (c) of this section.²²⁰

The R.I.C.O. Act, such an obscure piece of catch-all gobbledegook that even leading American advocates were to find the wording ununderstandable, nevermind the particular interpretation, had lain dormant on the statute books for a number of years since being railroaded through the legislature by the Nixon administration ostensibly to curb the power of the Mafia, to which purposes it had, perhaps significantly, never been used.

So it was that this obscure piece of legislation, originally enacted for an entirely different purpose, came to be presented to a Grand Jury as evidence that the Hells Angels had committed an indictable federal offence sufficiently serious to demand that the full panoply of the law be visited on their heads. On the evening of June 13th, 1979 more than two hundred F.B.I., state and local law enforcement officers, armed with sawn-off shotguns and fully automatic assault rifles, backed up by helicopters and dogs, executed a simultaneous three state sweep of Hells Angels members and associates, resulting in the arrest and detention of thirty-two 'target figures' as delineated on the secret Grand Jury indictments. Amongst those arrested were club president Sonny Barger, whose bail was immediately set at one million dollars, an unprecedentedly high figure. After being charged, the thirty-two were ceremoniously transported to a military prison camp, guarded by military personnel, located on an island in the San Francisco Bay, to await their fate. Even the late Al Capone, for all his many sins, hadn't enjoyed such attention from the federal government.

The Angels' attorneys, sponsored by the American Civil Liberties Union, claimed, with justification, that the R.I.C.O. Act constituted a blatant and unacceptable infringement of the

First Amendment of the United States Constitution which states that it is the fundamental right of every citizen that 'a person's guilt or innocence is determined by what acts he performs, not by what organisation he may belong to'. Likewise it infringed both the Fifth and Sixth Amendments, which deal with double jeopardy and the right to a speedy trial for crimes committed respectively, plus contravening the Statute of Limitations. They maintained that American law had traditionally acted as a guarantee against the government engaging in mass or show trials, pleading that "the danger of this kind of trial is that a person may be found guilty, not for what he did, but for what some other defendants did, the jury believing that 'birds of a feather flock together'".²²¹

"Before the R.I.C.O. Act became law, a person could not be tried for acts which he did not personally perform or for which he conspired to perform. Under R.I.C.O., you may be tried together with persons you have never met and with whom you never had any dealings, criminal or otherwise. Evidence of other persons' criminal conduct will be used against you.

"This act by the Federal Government marks the attempt to outlaw the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club and to make membership or association with the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club an illegal act."²²²

September 1st., 1979: "Workmen are putting the final touches to a Hells Angels courtroom that has been specially remodelled to seal off spectators with bullet-proof 'plexiglass' walls. Presiding over the upcoming trial will be Federal District Judge Samuel Conti, who has a reputation as a strict law and order advocate."²²³

October 4th., 1979: "The federal court trial of Hells

Angels Motorcycle Club members got underway today in an arena of strict security. U.S. Attorney G. William Hunter and Assistant U.S. Attorney Robert F. Dondarro have told reporters that the Government will attempt to prove that the motorcycle club operate an extensive and highly profitable drug business." 224

November 29th., 1979: "Jurors in the ongoing Hells Angels racketeering trial today heard testimony from key prosecution witness Thomas 'Big Red' Bryant. A former Hells Angel, Bryant has been provided immunity from prosecution himself. Defence attorneys are attempting to find out whether Bryant has been paid for his appearance at the controversial trial." 225

July 2nd., 1980: "The Federal Government's year long effort to destroy the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club collapsed today when the jurors were unable to reach a verdict in the nine months multi-million dollar trial. Leader Sonny Barger and other club members were acquitted of racketeering charges, but Government attorneys pledged that they will retry the case once again." 226

August 6th., 1980: "Charges of conspiracy against Sonny Barger and his wife Sharon were dismissed today in what prosecutors called 'the best interests of justice'. Racketeering and conspiracy charges against ten other defendants in the trial were also dismissed, but federal attorneys are preparing to launch yet another prosecution of the remaining club members." 227

Commented Barger:

"It looks like the case has fallen apart. I don't know what'll happen now. There's a lot of people still over there that need to get out. They've been in there nine months and they haven't proved a damn thing, and they're not gonna." 228

In attempting to prosecute the Hells Angels in such a manner, the Federal Government had inadvertently turned the tables against themselves. The American public might not have been on the side of the Angels at the outset, but by the time the legally controversial, lengthy and alarmingly expensive trial had dragged to a humiliating close, it was beginning to wonder just who were the real villains of the piece. And, even that sector of the population who would have preferred to have seen the bikers put safely behind bars, were loud in their condemnation of the government's ham-fisted operation.

The conservative press questioned the wisdom of the granting of immunity to self-proclaimed felons in order that they might testify as prosecution witnesses - Bryant, of whom the jury foreman later said, "I believe everybody in the jury room felt that this Government witness (was) rather despicable and beneath contempt ..." 229 , had it transpired, not only been guaranteed immunity from prosecution on murder and drug trafficking charges, but had been rewarded for his testimony under the Federal Witness Protection Programme to the tune of \$52,925 - and increasingly voiced doubts about the government's claim that the Angels represented the apex of the nation's organised crime operators.

The magazine Easyriders, with a biker readership of close on two million, initiated an aggressive campaign of support on behalf of the defendants. They saw the Angels' trial as a test case which, if lost, would threaten to start a legislative ball rolling that would only come to rest when each and every outlaw motorcycle club in the United States had been declared an 'illegal organisation' and forcibly shut down. Under the image of Adolf Hitler in the guise of Uncle Sam, the magazine delivered the following editorial message:

"The federal government (has) filed an indictment ... charging thirty-two individuals with being members of a Racketeering-Influenced and Corrupt Organisation (RICO). The organisation in this case was the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club.

"The Act under which they were charged, the Organised Crime Control Act of 1970, is an omnibus bill designed to subvert the constitutional protections to which a criminal defendant is entitled.

"Under the Act, the Attorney-General has the power to subpoena any documentary materials he believes may be relevant before he has instituted any civil or criminal proceedings. The crime consists of associating with an enterprise which has received income derived from a 'pattern of racketeering activity'. A 'pattern' is established by proving that a member or associate of the enterprise has engaged in the commission of any two of some thirty-two enumerated offenses within a ten-year period.

"The 'enterprise' is established by the criminal records of its members and associates and those persons are then prosecuted for belonging to the enterprise. The penalty is twenty years and \$25,000 for each count, plus forfeiture of the enterprise. The offense does not require agreement, concerted activity, or even that the defendants know one another. It is a separate crime of conspiracy to associate with a Racketeer-Influenced Corrupt Organisation ...

"... As would be expected in such a prosecution, the constitutional questions are many and difficult. Judge Conti paid little attention to the defendants' arguments that their First Amendment rights of association were being violated, even though the prosecution conceded that the Act could be applied

to political parties and churches. The lawyers are ... challenging search warrants which the government contends authorized seizure of all bank-books, calendars, financial records, books, insignias, club emblems, catalogues, and even a \$2 discount coupon for a Straw Hat Pizza Parlour. The warrant was accompanied by instructions from the prosecutor to seize anything the agents wanted, because if not useful, it could always be returned.

"... Unable to 'stop' the Hells Angels through regular criminal procedures, the federal government has resorted to this dangerous legacy of the Nixon Administration. It is no exaggeration to say that if they succeed with the Angels, you may be next."²³⁰

It wasn't only the motorcycle press who expressed their outrage over the R.I.C.O. prosecution, the prestigious and very influential Forbes Magazine was sufficiently alarmed at the prospect of the indiscriminate application of such dubiously constitutional legislation that they too firmly placed themselves on the side of the Angels. Millionaire publisher and former advisor to the Carter administration Malcolm Forbes took it upon himself to issue a personal challenge to the federal government, ridiculing their decision to specifically target outlaw motorcycle clubs in this way.

"We could", he wrote, "easily eliminate cancer if we promptly eliminated those who have it or get it. So far as I know, no one is advocating this instant solution to an as yet unresolved problem. To the best of my knowledge there's not even a congressional resolution - as yet - proposing such a draconian cure ...

"... And all along we've been thinking inflation was a major

problem: that Iran's seizure of U.S. hostages was a big problem;
that the U.S.S.R.'s takeover of Afghanistan and threat to the
Mideast oil on which the Free World yet depends was a very grave
concern. And all the time the real threat is 'outlaw motorcycle
gangs', the definition of which apparently is to be left to any
and all local, state or national officials.

"So far as I know there is a Justice Department, and FBI
and multiple state and local law enforcement agencies to enforce
laws against illegal drugs, kidnapping, enslavement, extortion
and murder. Should the fact that SOME of those crimes are
SOMETIMES committed by persons who ride motorcycles call for
making the other 7 million Americans who ride 'em subject to
harassment any time two or three of them get together for a
ride? How about special strike forces for lawbreakers who also
share enthusiasm for horses or Chevrolets, or Budweiser or
blondes?"²³¹

One of the Angels' defence attorneys was even more to the point:

"Under the R.I.C.O. law the efforts of the Government were to take a high-profile group, such as the Hells Angels, who have notoriety, and use the R.I.C.O. law to make bad law in the future.

"The R.I.C.O. law as used in this particular case generated abuses of search warrants where the Government went into homes looking for quote 'insignia' of membership of the Hells Angels. What if one of my fellow attorneys were to be suspected by the federal authorities of having committed some undetermined criminal act at some undetermined time with certain undetermined persons, would that mean that the entire membership of the

American Bar Association would be held liable?"²³²

October 14th, 1980: "Under the eye of Federal Judge William Orrick, the second racketeering trial of Hells Angels members got under way in San Francisco today. Defence attorneys called for the admission of testimony from ex-policeman Scott Barnes. A former undercover officer, Barnes has told lawyers and reporters that he once served on a Government organised and financed Biker Enforcement Team."²³³

Barnes, it transpired, was a man of unimpeachable character - at any rate by the standards of American justice - and quickly proved himself to be the trump card of the defence and bane of the prosecution. He revealed that he was a trained military intelligence operative, who had seen service both in Vietnam and at the Pentagon, and had been seconded to serve as part of a shadowy organisation known as the Biker Enforcement Team (B.E.T.). B.E.T., he told the court, had been formed in the mid-1970s by agents from the United States Department of Justice, as well as other clandestine law enforcement officials from federal, state and local agencies, "geared on a secret, vigilante-type investigative technique to destroy the Hells Angels at any cost."²³⁴

"What do you mean by 'destroy'?", asked a defence attorney. Replied Barnes: "We felt that the only way to get to them was to destroy the leadership and make them fall and do widespread chaos - to destroy them ... To put in prison, to kill if need be, to do away with, to set them up. We did various set-ups - drugs, weapons, and acts of violence against them. Fire bombings and things of that nature ...

"B.E.T. had no limits, in that aspect we had a free hand financially and intelligence-wise to do anything that we wanted with two more people's approval. Myself, and let's say one

other, another agent ... They put it into you that 'they are the bad guys and we have to get rid of them at any cost', and so therefore everything is okay, and don't worry about any of the line-tappings or the drug set-ups, or the weapon set-ups ... If anything needed to be done to get them we did it.

"B.F.T. was organised by the United States Government. It started with the Drug Enforcement Administration (D.E.A.) and included federal Treasury agents, organised crime investigators, certain district attorney office organised crime investigators, Erville Younger's O.C.C.I.B. (Organised Crime California Intelligence Bureau) and C.C.I.B. (California Counter-Intelligence Bureau) and consisted of some very elite, sophisticated intelligence officers and their covert operatives ...

"All B.F.T. agents were hand picked and recruited by certain individuals who felt that they could be beneficial and keep their mouths shut in some heavy investigations, and so they were all hand picked and screened and trained very deeply in surveillance, wire-tappings, parabolic mirrors, sniping, drug use, and things of that nature ...

"... We were creating fear in other law enforcement people in the state, saying, 'Hey don't trust the Angels, they are killers', and we are putting this fear into new recruits who are coming out of the Academy - 'Hells Angels are bad, get 'em' - you know?

"It got to a point where ... at any cost we had to get them. Nothing mattered any more - your wives, your families it got to a point where some of us were using drugs just to keep our own sanity ... We got to running with the muck of the street people and we felt that we were the good guys and they were the bad guys, and we had to get them at any cost. It's not a

Monday to Friday job, a nine to five, you are on your guard day and night. You are wearing bullet-proof vests all the time. You are carrying automatic weapons, shotguns, your whole life is different ...

"We are using the media - KGOY in San Francisco - many times. We manipulated them many times to print stories that were false ...

"During the trial we needed some adverse publicity, in the first R.I.C.O. trial, so we had some of our agents call KGOY and say 'Oh yeah, I'm just a concerned citizen. Isn't it terrible what these Hells Angels are doing? They are on trial now. They are murderers.' Hundreds of thousands of people would hear that. It would plant in their minds that they are bad and that they have got to be convicted. We would hope that maybe one of the jurors, or even a friend of the jurors, would hear that and say, 'Hey, you're in the Hells Angels trial, I heard on the radio how bad they are.' That put in their minds the psychological effect that they are so bad they would see that they were convicted. In their minds they are already convicted ... 235

Barnes testified that he had first encountered members of the Hells Angels in the course of an unsuccessful Mafia-busting operation. At that time he was attached to the C.I.A. and engaged in setting up a grass for drugs racket, whereby confiscated weapons from the United States, officially scheduled for destruction, would instead be shipped across the border to Mexico nationalists in exchange for marijuana, the intention being to use this operation to entrap syndicate contacts. "Somewhere along the line", he says, "it seems to me that somebody (Younger) got carried away with the notion of the Angels

involvement, and the balance got shifted, and the organised crime issue became sub-variant to the Angels ... (It was said), 'Let's target them, and build up credibility with the United States Attorney's Office'." 236

Barnes left the C.I.A. and went undercover as a corrupt police officer in San Diego, where he liaised with other B.F.T. operatives. During his marathon stint in the witness box he outlined the methods that B.F.T. had pursued in their campaign to destroy the motorcycle club:

"We wanted to get a war going between the rival gangs, the Mongols and the Hells Angels, so we convinced the Mongols that the Angels were taking over them and we convinced the Angels that the Mongols were going to try and take them over, and we planted certain bits of evidence to provide innuendos ... Certain people would be killed to show, 'Hey the Angels just killed this guy' ... (The) clubhouse in El Cajone was burnt down ... and we told the Mongols that the Angels burnt the clubhouse down, and things like that ... The two guys that were killed in Escandido, we said that the Angels did that ... We kept blaming crimes of violence on each other and finally there was such a paranoia and fear on the street and throughout the state that they decided to go to war ...

Defence Attorney:

"Who was actually doing the killings? The bombings?"

Barnes:

"Two of the killings and three of the bombings that I personally knew were done by B.F.T. operatives. I was directly involved in one of the bombings ... I knew about the bombing in the funeral parlour about two hours before it was going to happen. (The blowing up of the funeral parlour prior to the

interment of an assassinated Mongols' member was widely blamed on the Angels, and was used as a central plank of the R.I.C.O. prosecution, although no individuals were actually charged with the offence.) I knew about the killings in Escandido ... The sheriff and his homicide bureau would say 'unsolved crime - organised crime hit'. It came out as bad people. 'We did it. We did a good job. Now the war is really going to escalate ...'

"We would manipulate and use the news media to gain favour on the side of law enforcement during this time. We would use and burn hookers and we would scare hypes on drugs. We'd make a deal and say, 'You do this and you do that and we won't prosecute you'. They'd do it and we'd prosecute anyway, and nobody believes them because they are drugees. We'd use the dirtbags of society - hookers, we could burn them a dime a dozen ...

"... You got hyped up. It's like the adrenalin, you just keep going. 'We're a secret little group, my buddies don't know, my watch commander doesn't know, nobody knows. We're really secret, and we are high up, and so therefore we have got to keep our camaraderie, our brotherhood together. We're the ones, we are in the front line and they're not, and they don't know about it ...'

"... It's just like the Green Berets. You are the elite of the government, the government depends on you ...

"... (You) have got to get the public behind you. If you get the public behind the prosecutors and the police they're gonna be rooting for you. The majority of society are saying, 'Yes, you cops are right. The Angels are bad.', and you get them brainwashed into believing you and it is a good psychological ploy, it's propaganda. It was used in Vietnam ...

"... We used the media to get other law enforcement people to believe that it was a real war, that it wasn't just a set-up, because we didn't want anybody to know that we were setting all those things up ...

"... Erville Younger had a really heavy vendetta against ... the Angels, and he decided that the O.C.C.I.B. and C.C.I.N. ... (produce) a booklet that was published on people that he (Younger) wanted to get, and (which) was mainly about the Angels. They would give them to various law enforcement people and say, 'Our intelligence sources tell us ...', and they would make this list up about the Angels and the names, dates, times and places, and a lot of it would be phoney, just to get other agencies behind the A.G. (Attorney General) ... This came from the A.G. himself, Erville Younger ... (And) then, later, it became a nationwide teletype 'Attention All Law Enforcement Personnel'. Every county, every C.I.B. (Criminal Intelligence Bureau), every police officer ... was supposed to get this bulletin to beware of the Hells Angels - they were out after law enforcement people."

Defence Attorney:

"You said 'phoney' ... Younger issues misinformation to all law enforcement personnel. Let's get to who is advising him and why."

Barnes:

"Who's advising him is a good question. I think he took it upon himself, probably because he wanted to get involved and become a governor ..., and it just didn't work out ..."

Defence Attorney:

"What do you think that Younger thinks about B.F.T.'s

failure? Is it an acknowledged failure?"

Barnes:

"First, everybody denied that B.F.T. ever existed. The first news reports appeared - the Chronicle, A.B.C. - then all of a sudden they found out. Quite a few guys started talking that B.F.T. was a secret team. And then ... B.F.T. ... finally blew, but it was only in L.A. (Los Angeles). And they go, 'No, no, it was in San Diego. It was in New York. It was in Mexico. It was in Omaha, Nebraska ...'. So, finally it was exposed ... (and) B.F.T. as we once knew it is finished."

Defence Attorney:

"How big was it? How extensive was it? Was it international?"

Barnes:

"We used Interpol to get to the European Angels ..."

Defence Attorney:

"Did you have involvement with the C.I.A.? Did you have involvement with Secret Service?"

Barnes:

"Yes, both of them."

Defence Attorney:

"This goes to the top echelon of the Federal Government? It goes all the way? It goes beyond the wildest dreams of the Hells Angels at any point? ... What was the reason that it got so extensive?"

Barnes:

"The reason? I don't know the reason. I can only speculate who was calling the shots on top. I don't think we'll ever know ... (But) money was no problem ... I personally had thirty

to forty thousand dollars in cash I put in banks all over the Pacific north-west. I had a good cushion. They gave me plenty of money. Money was no problem. That was the major thing in law enforcement that the Angels didn't realise. Any time you wanted money - five, ten, fifty, a hundred, three hundred thousand - no problem. Money was not a problem - never."

Defence Attorney:

"Well it seems that whoever was calling the shots, it was a more effective attempt to destroy the Hells Angels than organised crime..."

Barnes:

"We were trying to convince the public that the Hells Angels are organised crime. They are a syndicate family. They are not just a bunch of bikers in Oakland ... They are not just a bunch of beer drinking boys on bikes. They're Mafia."

Defence Attorney:

"Was that connection ever made?"

Barnes:

"Oh yeah. We made it with the bomb ... The truth being that there was a conspiracy of law enforcement agents to use clandestine, covert, illegal means to destroy the Hells Angels at any cost...."²³⁷

February 25th., 1981: "A second conspiracy and racketeering trial against Hells Angels members ended today after jurors reported they were hopelessly deadlocked. U.S. Attorney G. William Hunter told reporters that he would not seek a third trial after noting that the interests of justice had been served in what observers say is the longest and most expensive federal prosecution in history ...

Sonny Barger:

"It was nine to three both times for acquittal, and it just showed that they didn't have a case. It was really lousy."

N.B.C.:

"We're talking here about ten million dollars of the taxpayers' money. We're talking about a series of paid informers ..."

U.S. Attorney G. William Hunter:

"I think under the circumstances we did what we thought was right and I have no regrets for having done that..."²³⁸

Allegations that leading American outlaw motorcycle clubs are criminal organisations on a par with the Mafia and similar traditional organised crime families had been voiced by law enforcement agencies at a state level, well before the federal authorities made the decision to initiate the R.I.C.O. prosecutions. As far back as 1965, Californian Attorney-General Thomas C. Lynch held a series of consultative meetings with law enforcement operatives from throughout the state in order to determine how best to tackle the 'problem' of the "Hells Angels and other disreputables".²³⁹ Later that year, the Lynch Report, the first of many dealing with the supposed criminal activities of outlaw bikers, and a document quoted with authority ever since, surfaced amidst a welter of media interest. Thompson describes the fifteen-page report as reading "like a plot synopsis of Mickey Spillane's worst dreams",²⁴⁰ but, fact or fantasy, its contents made headlines across the nation.

"The report was colourful, interesting, heavily biased and consistently alarming - just the sort of thing to make a clanging good item for the national press. There was plenty of mad action, senseless destruction, orgies, brawls, perversions and a strange

parade of innocent victims that, even on paper and in careful police language, was enough to tax the credulity of the dullest police reporter. The demand was so heavy in newspaper and magazine circles that the Attorney-General's office had to order a second printing ... The heart of the report was a section titled 'Hoodlum Activities', a brief account of outlaw activities dating back for almost a decade."²⁴¹

Time Magazine, that organ instrumental in first spreading the word about the heinous doings of outlaw motorcyclists seventeen years earlier in the wake of the 'invasion' of Hollister, in conjunction with its rival Newsweek, gave the Lynch Report front page billing under the heading 'Last Week The Wild One Was Back - And In Real Life'. Time also added one or two touches of its own, positively guaranteed to make its three million strong readership recoil with horror at the motorcycle-borne evil in their midst, notwithstanding the fact that the vast majority of them had never, and would never, come into contact with the 'menace'. The real facts of the Lynch Report, in spite of the attempts to colour them up, were, writes Thompson, "pretty dull stuff and Time couldn't find room for them. The article continued instead in a high-pitched, chattering whine, with a list of phony statistics"²⁴² about the Hells Angels:

"Founded in 1950 at Fontana, a steel town 50 miles east of Los Angeles," they write inaccurately, "the club now numbers about 450 in California. Their logbook of kicks runs from sexual perversion and drug addiction to simple assault and thievery. Among them they boast 874 felony arrests, 300 felony convictions, 1,682 misdemeanour arrests and 1,023 misdemeanour convictions, only 85 have ever served time in prison or reform schools.

"No act is too degrading for the pack. Their initiation rite

for example, demands that any new member bring a woman or girl (called a 'sheep') who is willing to submit to sexual intercourse with each member of the club. But their favourite activity seems to be terrorising whole towns ...

"When they are not thus engaged, the Angels - sometimes accompanied by the unmarried females who hang out with the club - often rent a dilapidated house on the edge of town, where they swap girls, drugs and motorcycles with equal abandon. In between drug-induced stupors, the Angels go on motorcycle-stealing forays, and even have a panel truck with a special ramp for loading the stolen machines. Afterward, they may ride off again to seek some new nadir in sordid behaviour.

"... (All) local law enforcement agencies have now been supplied with dossiers on each member of the Hell's Angels and on similar gangs, and set up a co-ordinated intelligence service that will try to track down the hoods wherever they appear. 'They will no longer be allowed to threaten the lives, peace and security of honest citizens of our state,' said Lynch. To that, ²⁴³ thousands of Californians shuddered a grateful amen."

Thompson, despite taking issue with Lynch's 'wildly inaccurate' estimate of 463 Hells Angels statewide - the true number being less than one hundred - argues that, even if one were to accept the Attorney-General's figures, "California's overall crime ²⁴⁴ picture (made) the Angels look like a gang of petty jack-rollers"

He notes that, "(these) woeful departures from reality made it hard to accept their other statistics. The dubious package cited Hell's Angels convictions on 1,023 misdemeanour counts and 151 felonies - primarily vehicle theft, burglary and assault. This was for all years and all alleged members including many since retired.

"California's overall figures for 1963 showed 1,116 homicides, 12,448 aggravated assaults, 6,257 sex offences and 24,532 burglaries. In 1962 the state listed 4,121 traffic deaths, up from 3,839 in 1961. Drug-arrest figures for 1964 showed a 101 per cent increase in juvenile marijuana arrests over 1963 ... (and) even allowing for the annual population jump, juvenile arrests in all categories (were) rising by 10 per cent or more each year. Late in 1965 Governor Edmund 'Pat' Brown, a Democrat, was berated by Republicans in the Legislature for 'remaining aloof' to the threat of the rising crime rate, which they said had jumped 70 per cent during his seven years in office.

"Against this background, it is hard to see how it would make any difference to the safety and peace of mind of the average Californian if every motorcycle outlaw in the state (all 901, according to the police) were garrotted within twenty-four hours."²⁴⁵

Today, two decades on, the figures emanating from the teletype machines of various United States federal law enforcement agencies, notably the F.B.I. and the D.E.A., are even more wildly inaccurate, and the claims relating to the criminal raison d'etre of outlaw motorcycle clubs even more extravagant. Masses of 'information', ranging from the ludicrous to the laughable, is annually manufactured and distributed on a worldwide basis, purporting to prove beyond all doubt that such motorcycle clubs are in fact overtly criminal bodies, founded and maintained solely for the purpose of furthering the illicit interests of their memberships. The primary targets for all this activity are the so-called 'Big Four' American outlaw clubs - Hells Angels, Outlaws, Bandidos and Pagans - who the F.B.I. claim are 'large-scale, organised crime operations'. And, of these, it is the Hells Angels, both because of the club's longevity and notoriety,

and because of its internationalism, that has born, and continues to bear, the brunt of these attacks, notwithstanding the embarrassing failure of the R.I.C.O. prosecutions. However, it is not only the major clubs who have been tarred with the organised crime brush; in the United States and in many other countries, including Britain, the outlaw motorcycle subculture as a whole is seen as posing a potential, if not an actual, threat to the health and welfare of the citizenry, and thus an eminently suitable candidate for curtailment.

The world's press, who for reasons of their own are wont to give heavy prominence to news reports dealing with 'Angel'-related incidents, the vast majority of which have not the slightest connection with motorcyclists let alone bona fide outlaw club members, have a habit of portraying those concerned with an ambiguity scarcely credible to anybody possessing even a passing knowledge of the subject. On the one hand, the outlaw biker is characterised as an unwashed, illiterate ruffian, lacking any interest or ambition beyond the immediate gratification of certain base bodily urges; while, on the other hand, he may alternately and irreconcilably be described as a slick, professional, sophisticated criminal, capable of a degree of mental agility necessary to carry out complex counter-intelligence ploys in order to evade prosecution. It is, I suggest, most exceedingly difficult to see how the average outlaw biker could be both things at the same time unless suffering a schizophrenic disorder of some considerable magnitude, but the tabloid, and indeed the 'serious' press, have a tendency to overlook matters of fact which might call either or both of these ascribed images into question, thus spoling a very rich source of myth and mayhem headline material. What concerns us, however, is not why the press continues to perpetuate such conflicting images of the outlaw motorcycle subculture, although

that is a fascinating subject in itself, but how closely one or other of them gels with the reality that underlies the myth. A second, although no less important question, is how it is that these images have arisen, and in whose interests it is that they should be espoused. Let us tackle the second point first:

In Britain, as in the rest of the world, it is to the Federal Bureau of Investigation and allied United States law enforcement agencies that we are indebted for the propagation of image two - the organised crime model. This model takes its cue from the organisational structure of outlaw motorcycle clubs, the apparent secrecy with which they are perceived to conduct their affairs, and their connections which spread beyond the boundaries of local, state and federal law enforcement jurisdictions. They are seen to be a conspiratorial phenomenon, whose members, by virtue of their involvement, must be up to no good. They are also said to be characterised by a hierarchical decision-making process internally, within which those 'in power' - the president, vice-president, sergeant-at-arms, etc. - utilise a ready supply of willing dupes to further their illicit activities. I quote from the 1979 Californian Organised Crime Control Commission Report:

"Conservative estimates indicate that more than 100 outlaw motorcycle clubs are active in California. Membership ranges from 12 to 200, with a combined state membership nearing 2,000. Of the approximately 100 outlaw motorcycle gangs, only six are considered a major enforcement problem. These are the Hells Angels, the Vagos, the Hessians, the Mongols, the Misfits and the Galloping Gooses.

"Although other outlaw motorcycle groups engage in criminal activity, their known activities do not appear to be commensurate with those of the six major gangs. The range of criminality

spanned by the major outlaw gangs is extensive. These groups have close affiliations with outlaw motorcycle gangs in other states. This affiliation imposes additional operational hardships on California law enforcement agencies, which require an extensive and continuous coordination effort with agencies of other states ...

"Of all outlaw motorcycle gangs in the State of California, the Hells Angels stand out above all others. This group is the epitome of all outlaw motorcycle gangs because of its criminal accomplishments and reputation. As a formal organisation, Hells Angels are identified as organised crime due to their network of state, national and international chapters. There are 24 chapters in the United States, 12 of them in California ...

"The organisation also has international ties with chapters in seven foreign countries.

"The Oakland chapter is considered the headquarters or mother chapter. The degree of control and influence exerted over other chapters, particularly at national and international levels, has not been clearly defined. However, officers from other state chapters are in frequent contact with Oakland chapter officers. In addition, Hells Angels officers from foreign chapters have been observed visiting Oakland and other California chapters. A reasonable assumption is that the Oakland chapter does have an influence in establishing the policies which have a bearing on the status of the overall Hells Angels organisation ...

"The more notable crimes attributed to the Hells Angels include but are not limited to:

1. Prostitution
2. Rape

3. Extortion and Intimidation
4. Bombings
5. Stolen Property and Auto Theft
6. Sale of Illegal Weapons
7. Arson
8. Murder
9. Assaults
10. Narcotics

"Testimony by law enforcement officers has established that certain members of the Hells Angels and other outlaw motorcycle gangs purchase, own or otherwise control legitimate businesses. The source of their funding is difficult to document, but it is believed that funds for purchasing of businesses is derived primarily from narcotic trafficking. The identification of illegal sources of money must be assigned a high investigation and enforcement priority.

"A common source of funds for outlaw motorcycle gangs is monthly dues. This source does not appear to be of such magnitude as to permit the financing of businesses or other investments. Hells Angels members do not lack funds in meeting attorneys' fees or posting bail ...

"Outlaw motorcycle gangs are known to have the ability to collect intelligence information from sources in local and state agencies. Law enforcement investigations have revealed that Hells Angels possess intelligence and counterintelligence capabilities equal to those of some law enforcement agencies and superior to others.

"The Hells Angels are equally proficient in counterintelligence activities. The techniques they employ in countering law enforcement efforts directed against them display a well-organized

effort. As examples, they:

1. Maintain lists of undercover vehicles being used by police agencies;
2. Maintain lists of radio frequencies assigned to law enforcement agencies;
3. Watch police officers closely and stake out their residences and other places frequented by them; and
4. Maintain intelligence files.

"The intelligence files consist of identities, descriptions, and photographs of individuals, vehicles and establishments of interest to the Angels. Although crude in nature, these files are extensive and provide a means for initiating well-organized countermeasures.

"The Hells Angels intelligence collection and counterintelligence activities are directed not only against police agencies, but also against rival gang members, individuals suspected of being informants for police agencies, and witnesses against Hells Angels members in legal proceedings ...

"A 1977 analysis of 30 Hells Angels members in a Southern California country reveals that 29 had prior felony convictions, 27 for crimes of violence. Of the 30 individuals analysed, felony charges against 26 were dismissed due to witness or victim failure to testify. These 30 individuals represented 530 arrests, an average of 17 per person; the arrests resulted in 206 convictions ..."²⁴⁶

Although the 506-page report is exceedingly liberal with its references to the various and manifold instances and forms of criminality associated with alleged members of outlaw motorcycle clubs, it signally fails to succeed in its stated goal, that of

proving to the Permanent Subcommittee on Investigations of the United States Senate that those same outlaw motorcycle clubs can be characterised as organised criminal groupings whose activities are primarily concerned with the acquisition of illicit gain. Much of the 'evidence' which fills this report, and others purporting to realise the same ends, relies heavily on a convoluted mixture of invective and innuendo relating to the supposed doings of outlaw club members, legally provable or otherwise, interspersed by long and tedious statements from a selection of 'authorities' on the phenomenon - F.B.I.-sponsored organised crime experts and behavioural psychologists. Amidst the plethora of 'appears to bes', 'thought to bes', 'believed to bes' and 'considered to bes', there is little verifiable fact other than lists of criminal convictions allegedly attributable to unidentifiable club members. But, however severe the implications may be for those particular individuals, whatever the extent of their individual acts of criminality or the lengths of their police records, there is nothing beyond the oft-repeated assertion that the Hells Angels and similar motorcycle 'gangs',"as formal organisation(s) ..., are identified as organised crime due to their network of state, national and international chapters," 247 the contention being that any such extensive and well-coordinated subcultural network, whose raison d'être is understandable to bourgeois society and its agencies of control, and whose alleged behavioural habits are generally considered to be morally obnoxious and physically degrading, could not possibly be anything other than a carefully constructed facade behind which lurks the sinister hand of organised criminal conspiracy. The following three exhibits are also taken from the above report and purport to prove, in diagrammatical fashion, how the organisational hierarchy of the archetypical outlaw motorcycle club functions to facilitate criminality of a widespread scale.

The first two deal with the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club, whilst the third represents a comparative study of the hierarchy of the American Mafia.

CHAPTERS
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

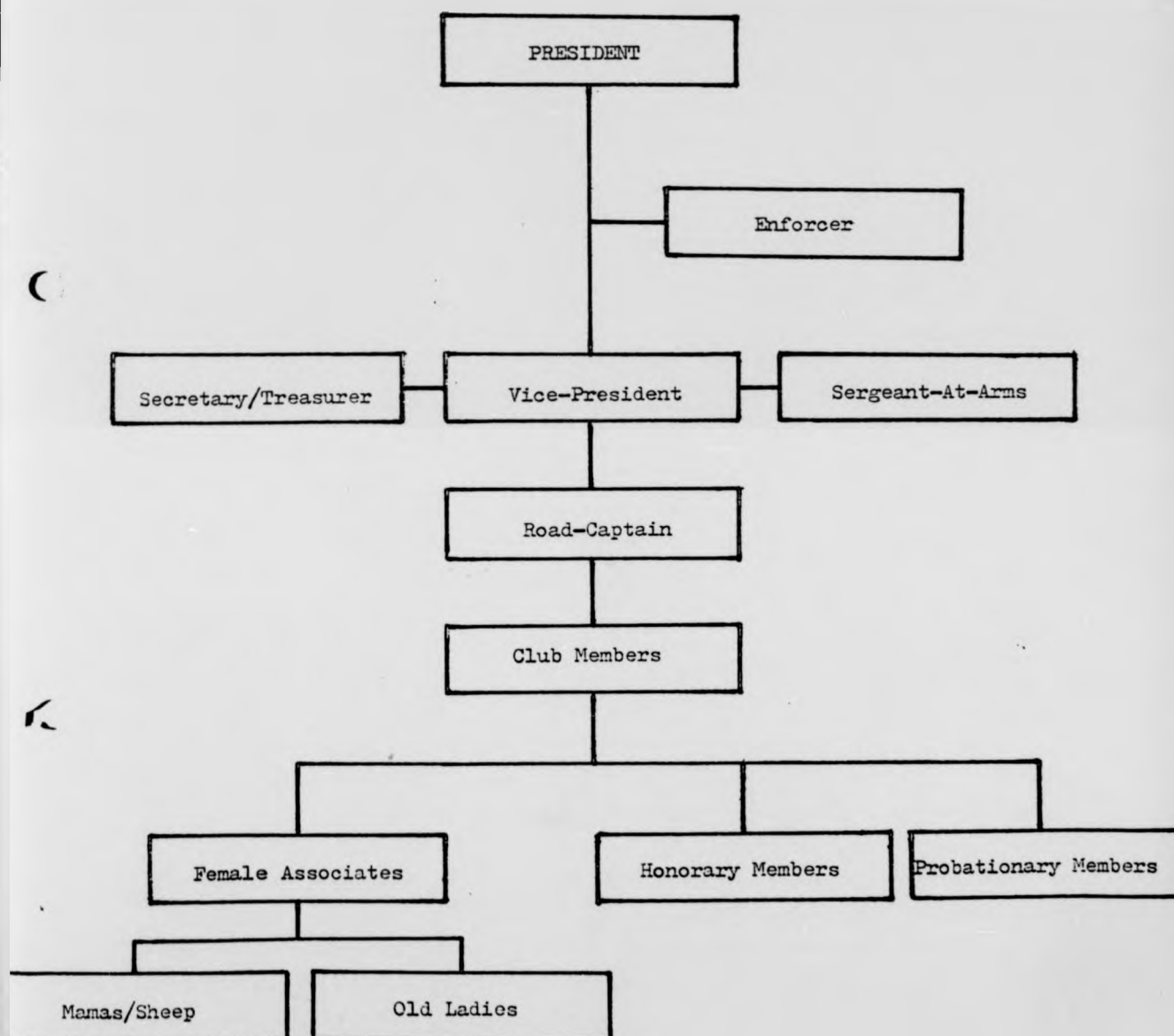


EXHIBIT NO. 1

NATIONAL
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

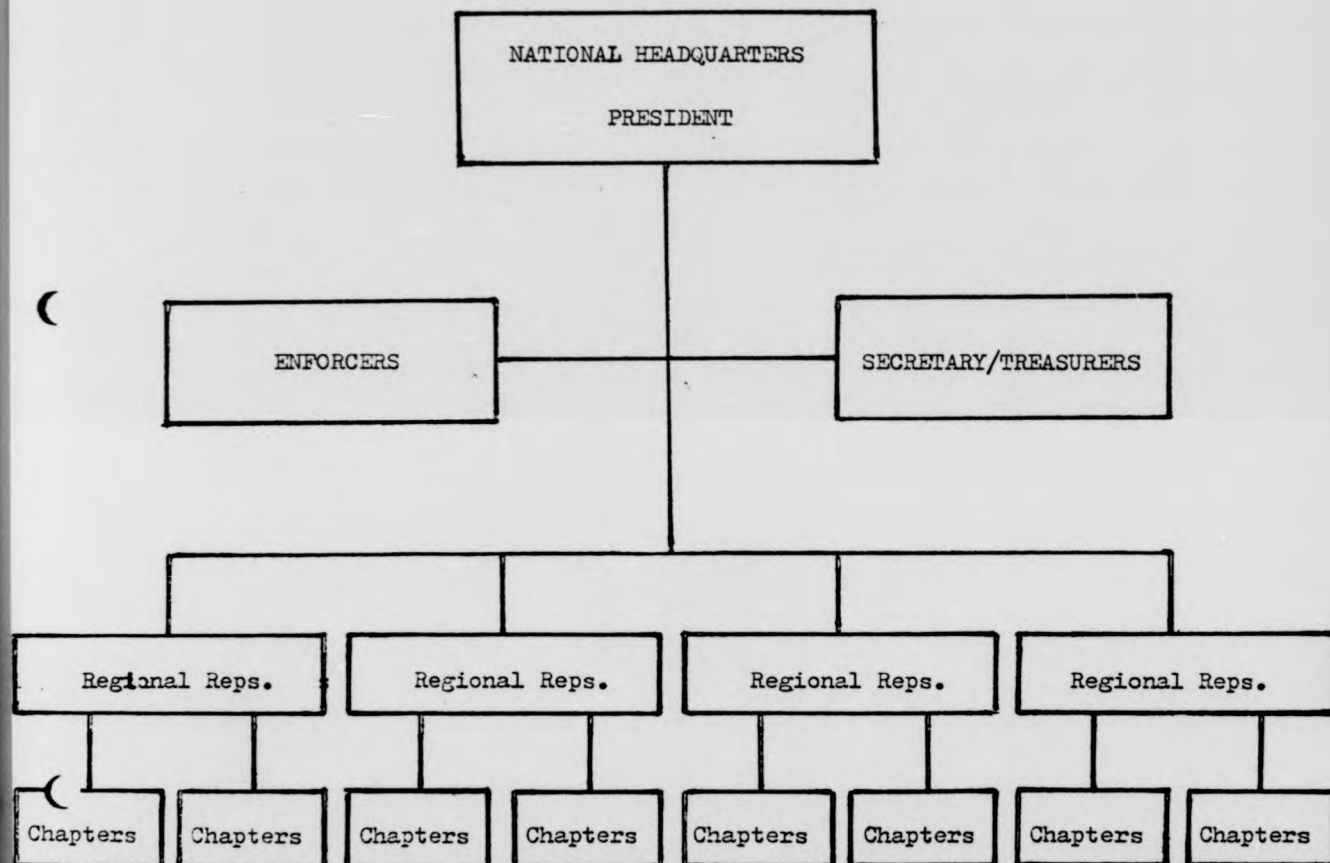


EXHIBIT NO. 2

MAFIA
ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

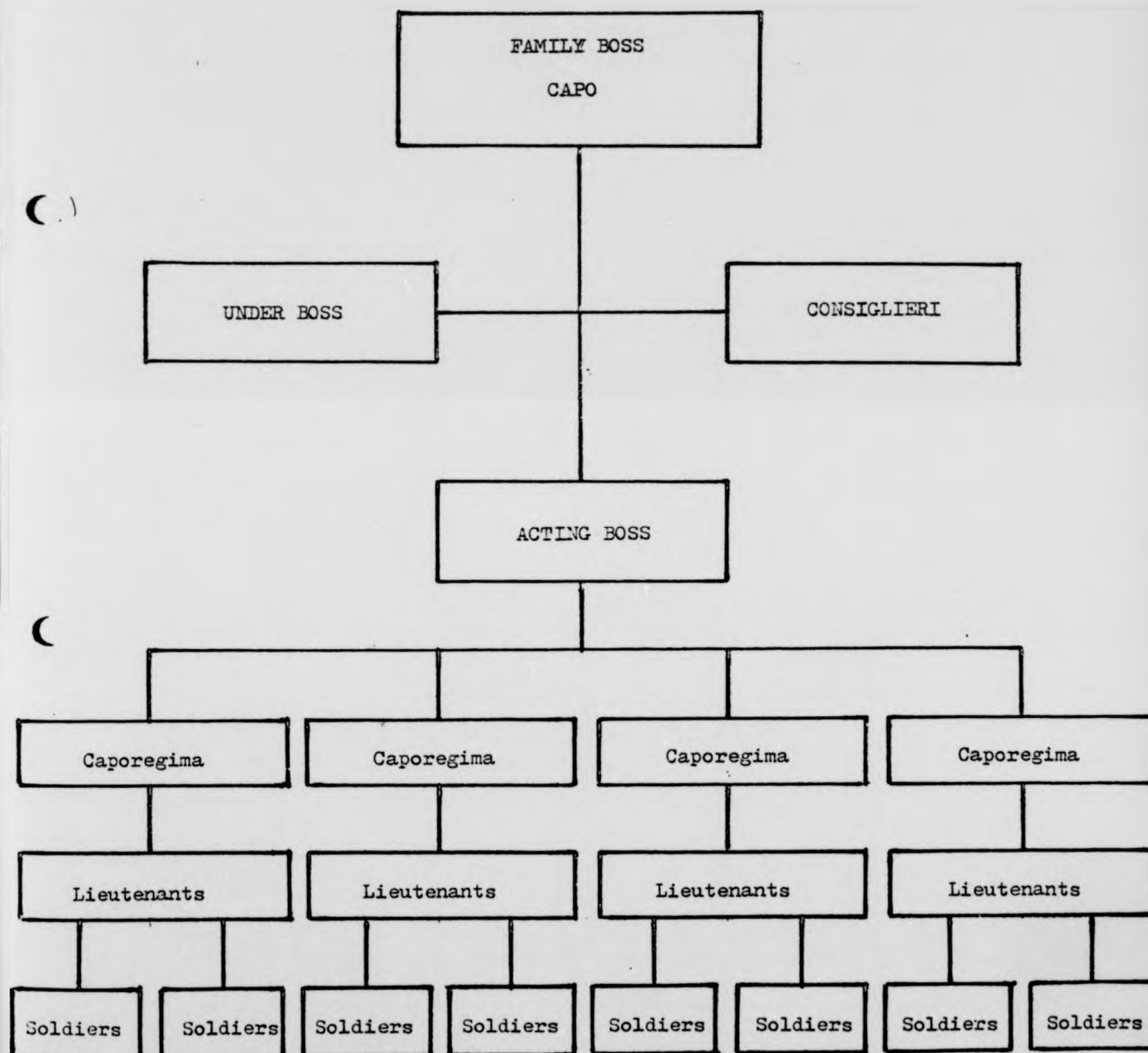


EXHIBIT NO. 3

Paramount in this model is the overriding assumption that every constituent chapter is rigidly administered and controlled by a hierarchy of officers at the apex of which sits the president, whose position of absolute power is maintained through the aegis of his right hand man the sergeant-at-arms or, in F.B.I. jargon, the 'enforcer', the remainder of the chapter's membership serving merely to carry out his wishes to the letter. At the head of this mythical hierarchy, insulated from the day to day hazards of life on the streets, is the so-called 'mother chapter' or board of control, which rules over its subordinate offshoots, directing their various collective criminal enterprises and receiving in return substantial financial rewards by way of tribute. In the case of the Hells Angels, whom the F.B.I. assert to represent the 'epitome of all outlaw motorcycle gangs', the controlling chapter which dictates international policy and reaps the rewards of others' 'criminal accomplishments' is 'reasonably assumed' to be the Oakland chapter and its president, Sonny Barger, the 'god-father' who pulls the strings. This startling revelation is based solely on the observation that "officers from other (Californian) state chapters are in frequent contact with Oakland chapter officers (and), in addition, Hells Angels officers from foreign chapters have been observed visiting Oakland and other California chapters. (The) reasonable assumption ... (being therefore) that the Oakland chapter does have an influence (read dominant control) in establishing the policies of the overall Hells Angels organisation ..." ²⁴⁸ Unfortunately for the experts on criminal conspiracy, this 'reasonable assumption' is entirely baseless in fact, whatever the observations which point to such a conclusion.

There neither exists, nor has there ever existed a Hells Angels 'mother chapter' fulfilling the role ascribed within the

motorcycle club by the F.B.I. Nor, for that matter does any similar body occupy such a position of control in the organisational structure of any of the more prominent outlaw clubs which have a multi-chapter membership anywhere in the world. As I have clearly indicated in Chapter X of this thesis, outlaw motorcycle clubs in general, and the Hells Angels in particular, are overwhelmingly uncharacteristic of the hierarchical model of organisation, and only the most subculturally naive of outlaw bikers would presume that they are. The 'mother chapter' is, quite simply, something which has been invented by United States federal law enforcement agencies to give substance to the theory that outlaw motorcycle clubs are conspiratorial criminal organisations and, along with many other myths surrounding the internal working of such clubs, has absolutely no basis in reality. It is certainly true that, in the case of the Hells Angels, Oakland is an old and much respected constituent chapter and its president, American Angel spokesman Sonny Barger, an equally well respected member, but it is neither the founding chapter of the club and nor does it exert any greater influence over the activities of the club as a whole than any other chapter or its president anywhere else in the world. The fact that Hells Angels officers from domestic and foreign chapters have been observed visiting California in general, and Oakland in particular, is in no way indicative of anything save that Hells Angels spend a great deal of their time travelling to visit brother chapters and that California, hardly surprisingly given its prominent role in the formation of the club, together with its climate which is highly conducive to motorcycling, is the obvious mecca for such visits.

Nevertheless, the F.B.I. has assigned their 'continuing investigation into the affairs of the Hells Angels and other outlaw motorcycle gangs' the very highest priority in its 'crackdown on

organised crime' which, it asserts, is aimed at "any group having some type of formalised structure whose primary objective is to obtain money through the use of violence or threat of violence, corrupt public officials, graft and extortion and which has a significant adverse affect ..."²⁴⁹

The Angels themselves freely admit to having a highly formalised organisational structure, indeed they regard their club's constitutional make-up and the ongoing group solidarity which that engenders with considerable pride, but at the same time strenuously deny the allegation that that same organisational structure functions as a criminal enterprise. They point out, with justification, that they possess no central authority beyond that which is invested in democratically constituted assemblies on a local, national and international level, convened on a regular basis to ensure group cohesion and facilitate an exchange of views. No routinised system of control exists on a day to day basis and communication in between meetings is often patchy, a set-up hardly conducive to the requirements of sophisticated criminal network, where a rigid hierarchy of administration and speedy communications are essential. They further point out that any group in society which stands out from the crowd in such a public fashion, whose members make no secret of their membership, and indeed advertise that membership on their backs, and who, because of their notoriety, are under constant surveillance by the police, are not exactly in a favourable position to carry out the very complex criminal activities which it is alleged they operate on a professional basis. It is not contended that certain members of the club have, on frequent occasions, been involved in crimes ranging from the trivial to the serious, including many of the offences listed by the F.B.I., nor that the majority of the membership have criminal records, but any suggestion that the club itself functions to

to either finance or foster such activities on a formal basis is greeted with derision. As an editorial in the Los Angeles Times put it:

"The Hells Angels admit they're not Boy Scouts. But they bristle at the F.B.I.'s suggestion that their club is a disciplined, structured enterprise engaged in organized criminal activity - drug dealing, gun smuggling, murdering witnesses, gunning down rival gangsters and bombing cops.

"There have been and will continue to be people who are found dirty,' acknowledged Michael (Irish) O'Farrell, acting president of the Oakland chapter, 'but those crimes ... are the individuals' own business and not planned or discussed at club meetings.'

"We're not organized crime,' he insisted ...

"And as to the question of whether or not O'Farrell's own chapter regularly received large payments of money from subordinate chapters around the world, all he could say was, 'I wish, I wish.'" 250

Another oft-repeated assertion which it is said lends weight to the theory that outlaw motorcycle clubs like the Hells Angels can be classified as organized criminal groupings is the allegation that, in order to become acceptable for membership, prospects must first prove their total allegiance to the club in question by committing a serious criminal act in the presence of two or more full-patch members. This, it is suggested by the F.B.I., is of itself sufficient evidence to brand the club an organized criminal group, irrespective of any further collective involvement in crime. It has even been suggested in some quarters that, as further proof of their loyalty, newly admitted full-patch

members of the 'Big Four' clubs are required to participate in the murder of a designated enemy within a six month period of their admission. And, whilst not one single shred of concrete evidence has been put in front of a court to support these damning contentions, even from the testimonies of former club members turned federal witnesses, they nevertheless stand as unchallengeable facts within the pages of international law reports.

So engrained are such myths surrounding the forms of group criminality attributable to outlaw motorcycle clubs that governments outside the United States have unquestioningly accepted the rumours as hard fact and taken appropriate action. When, in June 1986, the Auckland, New Zealand, chapter of the Hells Angels decided to throw a party to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of its incorporation it quickly found out just how potent a reaction those rumours were capable of fuelling as invited guests from all over the world were arbitrarily banned from entering the country. In spite of the fact that all the visitors' passports/visas were properly authenticated and it was not disputed that they were engaged in entirely lawful business, Director of Immigration, Don Bond, decided that he just wasn't prepared to let them in.

Chris Harder, an Auckland lawyer representing the Hells Angels, maintained that the visitors were turned away in breach of a specially issued directive from the New Zealand Minister of Justice and the Solicitor General. Mr. Harder said that although he had been assured that every Hells Angel wishing to enter New Zealand would be adjudged on an individual basis, he had been told by one of the banned men that they had been informed by police and immigration officials that no Hells Angel were to be allowed in. He added that the Hells Angels had provided the immigration division with advance details of visiting members in the

hope that their entry would be made smoother, but on arrival they were detained by airport police, photographed and told by a senior immigration officer: "Well boys, I have some bad news and some good news for you. The bad news is that you are not being allowed into the country. The good news is that the plane is waiting to take you home."²⁵¹

In a letter to the Minister of Justice, Mr. Harder requested that he use his powers to ensure that government policy was lawfully and correctly carried out, stating that: "I am of ... the opinion that any person who clearly has no criminal record should ... be allowed into the country unless there are very compelling reasons to do otherwise."²⁵²

It soon transpired that a secret directive had been issued to both Air New Zealand and the Australian airline Qantas to the effect that the government had requested that they henceforth refuse to issue tickets to Hells Angels members wishing to fly into the country. But, following a high-level parliamentary meeting to discuss the allegations, the Minister of Justice strenuously denied that he had ruled that Hells Angels members were to be barred entry, maintaining that each case was reviewed on an individual basis. However, he added cryptically, there was a good deal of information from Interpol to suggest that, although those refused entry had no criminal records, many other Hells Angels did. "I am advised", he said, "(that) there is a lot of material on the Hells Angels which suggests that in order to be a Hells Angel you need a serious conviction."²⁵³

In Australia and Canada too there is grave concern within the ranks of law enforcement agencies as to the criminality of their indigenous outlaw motorcycle clubs. In Melbourne, plain clothes police officers have, in the past year, been implicated in the

bombing of a Hells Angels' club house, apparently in an attempt to discover illgotten gains in the safe to which the High Court had forbidden the authorities right of access. Nothing of any criminal consequence was brought to light in this clandestine operation, but it did have the startling effect of exposing to the public gaze the extreme sense of paranoia with which the Australian police viewed the club. Court cases are currently pending.

The Royal Canadian Mounted Police National Crime Intelligence Branch, somewhat more subtle in approach than their antipodean colleagues, initiated the foundation of a national data base to record the crime patterns of outlaw motorcycle clubs. "Motorcycle gangs", they maintained, "were quickly becoming recognised as part of a very structured pattern of organised crime. (And although) police departments were actively devising and implementing new police strategies to counter the problem more effectively (greater) information and more thorough data analysis sharing between police departments on motorcycle gangs ... (was becoming) an important consideration."

"In speaking to law enforcement officers at a biker seminar in Toronto in 1977, John MacBeth, then Solicitor General for Ontario, pointed out (no doubt after prompting from the F.B.I.) that motorcycle gangs recognised no borders in their criminal transactions. Such gangs had syndicated themselves into a 'brotherhood' across the North American continent. If this threat was to be successfully countered, law enforcement officers across the continent would have to syndicate themselves as well. 'To control large scale crime problems, it is essential to have the complete co-operation of police forces everywhere, communications and understanding are the keys', Mr. MacBeth concluded."²⁵⁴

Thus, in May 1978, Project Focus, "A national data base intel-

ligence and information centre maintained by the R.C.M.P. National Criminal Intelligence Branch at Headquarters, Ottawa,"²⁵⁵ first saw the light of day. It's "major role ... (the) analysis of crime situations relating to motorcycle gangs, provincial and regional overviews as well as monitoring gang status.

"The concept is to collect a growing data-base on gang members, their activities, associates, offences, addresses and every other scrap of meaningful information on a continuing basis. All police agencies can assist in reporting anything they may have on outlaw gang activity, however insignificant that scrap may first appear to be. The gathered information is sorted and programmed according to members, nicknames, aliases, telephone numbers, addresses and so forth. A short narrative is also included and then analysed. Continually updated data is available to all Canadian law enforcement agencies in computer printout form ...

"Through the co-operation of the Criminal Intelligence Service Canada Provincial Bureaux, Project Focus has grown rapidly since its inception ... By February 1979, some 50 police departments were contributing information, including input from some United States agencies. To date, some 4,500 police reports (or an average of 150 per month) have been received. From these, some 53,000 information entries have been made. Project Focus has up until now (October 1980) documented 105 club chapters in Canada and the United States as well as some 5,700 hard core, one-percenter bikers (the definition of which is not revealed). The names of some 17,000 associates also appear in the system.

"For police identification purposes, a 'colours' photo album containing many club crests currently worn by outlaw motorcycle gangs has been distributed to police agencies. Focus has also responded to over 300 separate information requests, dealing with

individual items of intelligence, while others concerned larger undertakings such as a sweeping motorcycle gang situation analysis for a particular province."²⁵⁶

The Project Focus briefing document, details of which appear in the October 1980 issue of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Gazette, lists examples of how provincial police forces should prepare to tackle such 'sweeping motorcycle gang situations'. Paradoxically though, it is not the incidence of forms of organised criminality which appears to be of paramount concern in the pages of instruction to operational forces, but rather the normative manifestations of biker behaviour and, in particular, the club run, which is given top billing as a target for action. I quote at length:

"When word goes out that a biker gang is doing a run, the policemen along the run's route as well as at its destination, will want to know how many bikers are going, where they are going to and what their intentions are.

"Runs generally take some organizing. Bikes cannot transport cases of beer, sleeping bags, illicit weapons or drugs (In realising that, the R.C.M.P. seem to be one up on their American colleagues.) and the bikers themselves must appear to be 'clean' if stopped on the highway by police. A 'fash' truck (British Columbia jargon) will either tail or precede the main body of bikers by a mile or so. Fash trucks (also known as crash trucks) will carry spare bike parts in case of breakdown, sleeping bags, beer, drugs and weapons and be equipped with a C.B. radio sometimes in touch with one of the bikers on the run.

"When stopping bikes, policemen should be aware that a warning signal may well be sent to the accompanying truck, possibly

by C.B. radio. If possible, both the bikes and truck should be stopped simultaneously.

Points to consider when stopping a run:

1. Have one person in charge.
2. Choose a site which will not interfere with the flow of traffic.
3. Have riders pull bikes off into a field.
4. Ensure that each bike can be identified to its rider.
5. Have the police officer in charge speak first with the president or person in charge of the ride.
6. Tell the leader what your intentions are.
7. Try to have sufficient manpower to do a safe and proper check.
8. Have police approach cautiously from the side.

Do not:

1. Allow the public to stop and gawk.
2. Rush into the pack of bikers and bikes.
3. Approach with weapons drawn unless the situation dictates such action.

Bikers may have been checked several times during the course of their run and this may be only one of several times they have been checked. Normally they will attempt to maintain a low profile, however, one cannot underestimate the potential for any sudden action on their part. Be ready for any violent explosion but don't overreact.

Remember, any unnecessary action can cause a violent reaction.

Biker tactics

Recently the bikers are beginning to keep track of how often they are stopped when out on a run. They are generally polite to the officer stopping them. They make sure, however, that they

get the policeman's name and number. Their main purpose is to collect all this information.

A biker gang on a 100 mile run may have been stopped 11 times. Confronted by police the eleventh time, language may become abusive on both sides. Bikers have been known to record such conversations then take them to their lawyers. So watch what you say and how you say it ..."²⁵⁷

I must say that I find it difficult to imagine how any group of people going about their lawful business on the public highway could not fail to be incensed if they were marshalled into a field, questioned and checked over by the police eleven times in a journey of only a hundred miles. Surely, relations between different regional units of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are not so bad as to preclude radio communications from one to another confirming that a group of bikers have been checked, cleared and allowed to proceed, especially when the need for inter-departmental cooperation is expressly stated? One wonders whether these sorts of police tactics are not so much geared to apprehending lawbreakers as to actively discouraging certain 'undesirable elements' in society from exercising their perfectly legitimate right to travel en masse to non-officially approved destinations. As in the case of the American F.B.I., it would appear that the R.C.M.P. are much more concerned about the uncharted mobility of the bikers than they are about actual incidence of criminal behaviour. Small wonder that the bikers have taken it upon themselves to keep a check on how often they are stopped by police when out on a run. The noting down of the numbers of the officers involved and the recording of conversations which arise would appear to be an extremely sensible precaution in the circumstances, far more than reacting violently to what must surely be regarded as a discriminatory and flagrant breach of the bikers' civil

rights. Any lesser course of action would be inconceivable in the circumstances.

In fact, the declared policy of the R.C.M.P. vis-a-vis organised motorcycle club runs has long been a source of bitter contention, creating far more trouble than it was designed to contain. It has resulted in the bringing of several law suits against the police and on more than one occasion the Canadian law courts have seen fit to criticise such activities and compensate the victims.

Matters came to a head in a big way in September 1981, when a number of Canadian outlaw clubs, including the Hells Angels, Rebels, Grim Reapers, King's Crew, Satans Angels, Gitans (Gypsies) and Chosen Few, as well as a whole host of non-aligned bikers, announced their intention of holding their annual Labour Day Run in the small town of Coronation, Alberta, the scene of such gatherings for more than a decade. Since the early 1970's, between 3,500 and 4,000 bikers had made their way to Coronation in organised runs from Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, British Columbia and across the border from the United States, making it the biggest event of its kind in Canada. Initially, the townspeople had been wary of their two-wheeled visitors, but had come to tolerate their presence, and whilst an unnamed R.C.M.P. spokesman cited the bikers as being responsible for a "gang rape, assaults, break-ins and thefts", none of these offences had been reported to the local police who in no way opposed the annual runs and certainly did not expect any undue problems to occur in 1981. They had no reason to suppose that anything out of the ordinary would occur because, over the years, plans for dealing with the bikers had become routine for the four man force. The bikers arrived, were shepherded to prearranged camping sites, spent two days swelling the coffers of the business community, and left again, taking with them only minor citations for traffic offences, violation of vehicle code regulations and

the odd bout of drunken revelry. However, the R.C.M.P.'s National Intelligence Branch had other plans for Coronation's Labour Day Run. They had spent the previous two years preparing to implement Operation Checkstop, a large-scale crack-down on the outlaws, subsequently described in a news conference by their public relations officer as, "the largest such police action in Canada, (and) ... probably the largest collection of bikers ever checked at one time (anywhere in the world)."²⁵⁸

In a massive show of strength, two hundred members of the R.C.M.P.'s heavily-armed 'Red Deer' tactical units, together with detachments from Edmonton City Police Dept., backed up by riot weapons, a mobile police command centre, a telecommunications truck, a helicopter, two fixed-wing observation aircraft, prison buses, dogs, police photographers and breakdown wagons to take away 'suspect' motorcycles, descended on the run without warning. They were coordinated by teams of plain-clothes officers attached to Vancouver R.C.M.P.'s Special Biker Squad, who commanded Coronation's school gymnasium and hotel to serve as a barracks and communications centre. Road blocks were immediately set up on all major roads and the incoming bikers systematically stopped, checked, searched and photographed, irrespective of whether or not they were deemed to have committed any offence. According to a report in the Edmonton Journal:

"In what was described as the largest police action in Canada, 200 police put the heat on a weekend biker rally.

"More than a 100 charges were laid. 10 people were arrested, and the bikers, exhausted from round-the-clock attention by police, left town.

"At the height of the military-style operation ... the police sealed off the town's main street Saturday to inspect and photo-

graph bikers.

"R.C.M.P. public relations officer Cpl. Brant Murdoch said:...

"We don't have to justify Check-Stops, but the number of charges bid shows that Check-Stops work ...

"This operation wasn't aimed at the bikers, but at developing the police capability to move large numbers of men and equipment anywhere in the province on short notice.

"And having the outlaw bike gangs here just added to the rationale for having this operation now.' ... "259

By Monday morning, police had laid 113 Highway Traffic Act charges, mostly for minor violations such as noisy mufflers, 14 liquor violations (In Canada, as in the United States, merely being in possession of an opened can of beer in a public place constitutes a violation of the liquor laws.), eight charges of possession of marijuana and cocaine, one charge of possession of stolen property and one charge of possession of a restricted weapon (a buck knife). Ten people were arrested on outstanding warrants.

"(It was a strange weekend for Coronation's 1,400-strong population). Betty Clark, an 18-year old town resident, said she didn't like being stuck between bikers and police.

"It's scary seeing all these police and bikers in Coronation' she said. 'People are scared of the unknown, we don't like the problems of the city coming to our little town'.

"Mayor Muriel Heidecker said the bikers have not caused problems in the past and the council didn't ask for the police crackdown ...

"There were no fights between bikers, police and townspeople, no public rowdiness and no complaints from any citizens about abuse from the bikers.

"One woman riding with the Rebels, a 30-year old nurse at Edmonton General Hospital, spent the night in Stettler hospital

for observation after she said she was pushed to the floor of a police truck while being strip-searched by three women Mounties.

"Rebels club members say they are aware of recent court challenges to the Check-Stop program, which is intended to deter drunk driving and get unsafe vehicles off the highways. The club will be talking to its lawyers, members say, because they think using Operation Check-Stop to harass bikers is an abuse of the program.

"Bob, a 46-year old Rebels 'road captain' called the Check-Stop where he was inspected Saturday afternoon 'a Check-Stop at gunpoint'.

"We rode over the hill and down towards the campground when we saw the roadblock.

"Police marksmen in camouflage suits and painted faces were hiding in the bushes pointing their high-powered weapons at us while we were searched by other cops wearing flak-jackets.

"It's an expensive overreaction just for a few minor equipment violations. It's pure harassment ...'

"A contingent of 80 bikers ... roared into Coronation, where police refused to allow them to fill their gas tanks or leave town until they went through a Check-Stop.

"The downtown was sealed off and a Check-Stop set up.

"After an evening stand-off, the Satan's Angels agreed to wheel their bikes, cars and rental trucks through the police lines where every biker was photographed and checked for identification.

"By Sunday evening, the party spirit dampened and about half the bikers rolled out of town with police cruisers and aircraft following them."²⁶⁰

In a lengthy interview with The Province newspaper, William Lynch, vice president of the Satans Angels, also described the police action as 'blatant harassment'. He protested:

"I have never, ever had any hassles with them. I've had no violence record. I have no drugs. There's no reason for them to bother me at all."²⁶¹

But police spokesman Murdoch who, as it later transpired, was a leading member of the R.C.M.P.'s Edmonton Crime Prevention and Police Community Relations Dept., fobbed off criticism from both bikers and townspeople, stating belligerently:

"We seized the opportunity at this point, and why not? It seemed like a good place to stop and gather intelligence."

"He said that the R.C.M.P. planned 'to continue the operation until the bikers go home.'²⁶²

He later confirmed the police stance in an interview with the Calgary Herald. When asked for the underlying reason behind the somewhat drastic course of action, Cpl. Murdoch replied:

"There was no reason at all for the operation ..., other than the fact that it's just about time."

"They've ridden into town for six or seven years pretty well unchecked ..."

"There was a job that had to be done and it was done," he said.

"During the Check-Stop operation, photographs were taken and vehicles searched. Strip searches also were done after police had 'reasonable and probable grounds to conduct such searches,' Murdoch said."²⁶³

Edmonton Chief of Police, Robert Lunney, further defended the decision to prevent the run from going ahead. He maintained that timely police action had "'suppressed a major threat to peace in Central Alberta', adding that the R.C.M.P. had 'feared the gathering would result in an outbreak of crime."

"It was the assessment of R.C.M.P. that if appropriate police strategy and tactics were not applied, the Coronation ride in 1981 had all the potential for large-scale breaches of the peace beyond the capacity of the local detachment.'

"He said court records show motorcycle gangs have been convicted of murder, threats, drugs, weapons and thefts in the past and police intelligence has established 'without a doubt that the gangs are primarily large-scale criminal syndicates.

"Intimidation through appearance and overt threats has been a trademark of the gangs. We have been exceedingly fortunate in Alberta that we have not been subjected to the violence and fear that has overcome some communities resulting, from large assemblies of bikers.'"264

It soon came to light however that Chief Lunney's political superiors knew absolutely nothing about the 'major threat to peace in Central Alberta' that the bikers' run had posed. All they knew was that every section of the community affected by Operation Check-Stop, up to and including the Mayor of Coronation, was up in arms about the heavy-handed police tactics and threatening legal action against the provincial authorities. A lawyer representing the Rebels Motorcycle Club complained that his clients were dragged from their bikes, photographed, fingerprinted and interrogated, without being accused of even the most minor infringement of the law. Those that objected to this treatment were subjected to such intensive scrutiny of themselves and their vehicles that something was inevitably brought to light with which they could be charged and detained. A spokesman for the club told the Calgary Herald that:

"One (member) was inspected three times and only on the third inspection did police find the lowest point of the seat was 25 inches above the ground instead of the required 27.

"So they seized his licence and he had to walk his bike away and ship it home on a trailer." 265

In response to mounting criticism, Alberta's Solicitor-General, Graham Harle, authorised a press release stating that he did not know what Edmonton city police would be doing when he allowed them to participate in the Coronation crack-down, and admitted that he had only learned of the operation in news reports. He immediately ordered the R.C.M.P. to conduct an internal investigation into the affair, and suspended all charges against the bikers pending the results of the inquiry.

Meanwhile, four members of the Vancouver-based Satans Angels filed a lawsuit against the police citing aggravated assault, false arrest and wrongful imprisonment. Their lawyer also asked for a permanent injunction preventing future false arrests or 'malicious' prosecutions against club members. The Angels claimed that they had identified plain-clothes officers from their local Calgary city police at the road-block who, they said, pointed out particular bikers for harassment, arrest and photographing. Operation CheckStop was, they asserted, nothing less than a "blatant military exercise, an incredible display of police power with no other purpose than to flex muscle." 266

In September 1982, the bikers again chose Coronation as the destination for their Labour Day Run. This time however there were no road-blocks, no helicopters, no armed police, no tow trucks, no photographers, no prison buses and no arrests. A larger crowd than ever before were left alone to enjoy the townspeople's hospitality and left the campsites as quietly as they'd arrived. There was no major outbreak of crime and the peace of Central Alberta was not significantly threatened. A spokesman for the R.C.M.P. Criminal Intelligence Branch told the Calgary Herald:

"There's no doubt about it. They knew we meant bloody business after our roundup last year and behaved accordingly.

"We were prepared to do the same thing this year if the need arose ... There will never be a truce. People like this just have to be made aware that we're not taking any nonsense." ²⁶⁷

Project Focus has had a vital role to play in the shaping of the attitudes of the various provincial Canadian law enforcement bodies towards their native biker populations, both in terms of disseminating a plethora of information bulletins, statistics and psychological accounts of the bikers' inherent mental instability and aptitude for violence, and in terms of the coordination of an ongoing series of regional operations designed to create the maximum amount of public concern about the outlaws in their midst. As in the United States, upon whose federal law enforcement agencies the mandarins of Project Focus rely as the primary source of biker intelligence information, the overarching rationale for action is the contention that outlaw motorcycle clubs represent a logical extension of the more traditional pattern of organised crime families. This contention, as previously explained, is founded upon data which compares in diagrammatical form the organisational workings of the typical outlaw club with those of the Mafia, the assumption being that the supposed resemblance of hierarchical command structures, together with the attendant shroud of secrecy surrounding their activities, bears undeniable witness to the fact that such clubs by their very nature can be characterised as organised criminal groupings and should therefore be tackled aggressively whenever and wherever they raise their heads. Thus, quite irrespective of whether or not actual identifiable acts of criminality are involved in any particular instance, routine subcultural behavioural manifestations such as runs, however innocuous in themselves, become automatic targets for heavy-handed

police action simply because of the over-riding presumption that everything connected with the subculture must have, at base, a nefarious motive. As yet, there has been no attempt by the Canadian authorities to initiate a R.I.C.O.-style prosecution and test this hypothesis in a court of law, but judging by the rapidly expanding growth in influence of Project Focus in the past seven years, it may be only a matter of time.

In Europe, however, with the notable exception of West Germany, the organised crime analogy has not hitherto been applied to the outlaw motorcycle subculture except in the most marginal fashion by the tabloid press. Instead, the overwhelming assumption on the part of both police and public is that, far from being organised, sophisticated criminal groups, outlaw motorcycle clubs, where they can be distinguished from the mass of leather-clad motorcyclists, are, on the contrary, fundamentally disorganised rabbles with little aim or direction. The members of such clubs, it is popularly supposed, are incapable of writing their own names, let alone setting up a counterintelligence network which would outshine many a police department. Mythology - largely fuelled in the 1970s by a series of lurid New English Library paperbacks purporting to expose the authentic face of the Hells Angels - has it that although bike 'gangs' might well be a considerable public nuisance in terms of their rowdy behaviour and filthy appearance, they in no way present a threat to law and order commensurate with what of 'traditional villains'. It is, of course, widely known that individuals described by the press as Hells Angels - in Britain an enormously wide variety of motorcycling and non-motorcycling types - habitually indulge themselves in markedly antisocial, not to say criminal practices - drug taking, sexual abuse, street violence and petty theft - but it is not generally supposed that this is indicative of any underlying rationale of group criminality.

Evidence obtained from Metropolitan Police files, although dwelling heavily on the bikers' sexual mores, appears not to treat seriously the warnings of their American counterparts that even the home-grown varieties of outlaw motorcycle club are primarily engaged in the systematic construction of a conspiratorial criminal enterprise. When, in November 1982, the Federal Bureau of Investigation requested that the British police reprint a series of articles penned by Special Agent Roger Davies, formerly of the Biker Enforcement Team, entitled 'Outlaw Motorcyclists - A Problem for Police', concentrating on the inherent criminality of the outlaw motorcycle subculture and initially published in the F.B.I.'s prestigious Law Enforcement Bulletin, Scotland Yard's Information Department decided that, instead of being accorded the high priority assigned to it by the F.B.I., the information contained was of such dubious relevance that it be relegated to the pages of Clearway, the traffic magazine of the Metropolitan Police. And, whilst this move may have contributed to an increase in the apprehension of two-wheeled mobile traffic offenders, it nevertheless serves to illustrate the lack of credibility accorded to the approach of American law enforcement agencies towards outlaw motorcycle clubs.

Rather, it has been left to the press to deliver warnings of the problems that lie ahead if the police continue to treat the matter with an insufficient degree of seriousness. The Daily Express and the Daily Mail have had an instrumental part to play in the construction of the organised crime image, the former concentrating particularly on the motorcycle subculture's involvement in drugs-related crime - it has been alleged by the Express's resident 'expert' on the phenomenon, Colin Pratt, that the Hells Angels derive an enormous income from the control of more than thirty per cent of the British soft drugs trade - while the latter

gives prominence to the anguish of 'ordinary decent families' having to live in close proximity to biker club houses - witness the Mail's year long campaign to oust the Hells Angels' Windsor chapter from the premises which they occupy, quite legally, in an up-market area of the Royal borough. Other newspapers take a different tack, alternating between the two highly conflicting characterisations of the outlaw motorcyclist, but all are becoming increasingly aware of the mileage to be gained by treating their readerships to headlines which give emphasis to the overtly criminal nature of the subculture.

In recent years, reports concerning the alleged organised crime activities of the so-called 'Big Four' American outlaw clubs have begun to filter through into the pages of European newspapers and when, in March 1983, it was stated by an F.B.I. prosecution witness in the course of a Senate subcommittee hearing that the New York chapter of the Hells Angels had planned to assassinate Rolling Stones singer Mick Jagger, the sinister transformation of bikers into big time gangsters became front page news. In the Sunday Mirror, John Knight delivered a warning to British police forces of the dire consequences of tardiness in tackling the 'bike menace'. In an interview with William H. Webster, Director of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, Knight revealed just what the police priorities should be: "No. 1", he wrote, "used to be the Mafia (but) with the infiltration of top Cosa Nostra families by F.B.I. agents these evil men of organised crime are taking a beating.

"But today they have new allies: motorcycle gangs like the Hells Angels are the mob's muscle and drug couriers ...

"One thing doesn't change: an ill-breed of American outlaw on the move follows a distinct pattern.

"In the days of the cowboy they were the gunslinging rustlers

marauding from town to town. The twenties and thirties saw bank robbers in get-away cars.

"Today, they have turned into the Bikers. The Hells Angels, the Bandidos, the Outlaws and the Pagans link the huge continent of North America with fast moving drug distribution and violent debt collecting for the Mafia ...

"For all their dramatic and colourful experiences, the British police must learn a lesson from F.B.I. techniques ... Already, there is a steady two-way traffic of senior officers flowing between the Academy (F.B.I. training academy in Quantico, Virginia) and the Police Staff College at Bramshill, Hampshire.

"A mutually rewarding admiration society ...

"There are three favourite codewords in the Bureau's vocabulary: Surveillance, Entrapment and Covert. They add up in most cases to pretending to be criminals to catch criminals.

"Critics of the F.B.I. protest that the emphasis on these methods of detection endangers civil rights ...

"'Aren't these dirty tricks by agents going too far?' I asked Webster.

"'Entrapment has a sinister sound to it,' he admitted. 'The individual says, 'Yes I did what I did; but I wouldn't have done it if they had not twisted my arm.'

"'But the best answer to the critics is that everyone gets convicted and no appeals succeed. In baseball terms, we are batting 1,000 ...'

"I suppose it's good to know the F.B.I. is on our side. Better late than never." 268

The fact that the F.B.I. is now 'on our side' in the campaign to outlaw outlaw motorcycle clubs has no doubt contributed to the recent crop of 'operations' aimed at exposing British-based clubs as 'large-scale drug and theft rings.' And, in spite of the

considerable lack of success in actually locating sufficient evidence to bring the alleged culprits to court, the headlines awakening the public to the 'problem' continue unabated. "Angels 'Mafia' Busted", reported The Sun when, in December 1985, Thames Valley police raided the club house of the Hells Angels' Wessex chapter during the course of 'Operation Tablet'. No drug charges were brought in connection with the raid, and yet The Sun felt confident enough of the veracity of the allegations to assure its readership that, "Armed detectives probing a Hells Angels crime syndicate staged a massive raid on an address - dubbed The Fortress - and seized a hoard of drugs ..." ²⁶⁹ The Daily Mail, describing the same operation, used the evocative headline, "Menaced By The Mobsters", telling of "A terrifying picture of organised crime", ²⁷⁰ and the Guardian chose to spice up the story still further via the perverse allegation that the "undercover operation had averted five potential murders", adding that, "The Hells Angels made their reputation in the 1960s and shot to international notoriety when filmed stabbing a fan during a Rolling Stones concert at Altamont, California." ²⁷¹ As for the Daily Mirror, it only reported that, "A major Hells Angels drug and theft ring was thought to have been smashed." ²⁷² Maybe they didn't want to be accused of bias ...

The climate within which outlaw motorcycle clubs are characterised by the British media is certainly changing rapidly and, whilst not yet approaching the hysterical reaction exhibited in the United States whenever a biker-related incident is brought to public attention, attitudes are nevertheless hardening to the extent that almost all forms of activity having a connection with the riding of motorcycles on the public highway, however innocuous in themselves, are, at best viewed with suspicion and, at worst, total paranoia. Reporting on a funeral cortege held for a biker killed in an accident, during which a rider was booked by police

by police for failing to wear a safety helmet, not exactly a hanging offence, the Kentish Express ran the front-page banner headline, "Angry Angels Descend On Police Station",²⁷³ underneath which the newspaper recounted the remarkably uneventful story of how one of the aggrieved mourners had gone along to Ashford police station to lodge an official complaint regarding the actions of the officers concerned. The editor, apparently incensed that such obvious disreputables should have the effrontery to complain, asked his readers the following question:

"SHOULD WE sympathise with the bikers who complain they were harassed by the police when they followed in convoy a funeral procession to Charing Crematorium? Gut reaction is to accuse the police of showing scant humanity for the mourners who were attending the funeral of a friend killed in a motorcycle crash ... A readers letter on this page accuses the police of prejudice against bikers. The plain fact is that the public feels intimidated when confronted with a gang of motorcyclists - all intent on appearing as menacing as possible ... If bikers wish to be integrated into society as acceptable human beings, the onus is on them to clean up their act."²⁷⁴

If, in Britain, attitudes concerning the motorcycle subculture and its apparent predilection for criminality can be said to be progressively hardening, the authorities in West Germany have already travelled much much farther along the road towards designating outlaw bikers a proscribed species. On the 21st of October 1983, Interior Minister Friedrich Zimmermann put his signature to a banning order prohibiting the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club from pursuing their activities within the territorial borders of the Federal Republic. In reply to a letter to Dr. Zimmermann requesting details of the grounds for the ban I received the

following clarification:

"... The reasons for the prohibition of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e. V.' Hamburg are outlined in the enclosed Prohibition Order from the Federal Minister of the Interior of 21st October 1983 and the relevant press declaration of 2nd November 1983.

"The prohibition order constitutes an organisation proscription which dissolves the prohibited association. The members are forbidden to exercise within the prohibited association activities serving the organisational cohesion or further maintenance of said prohibited association. Cojointly with the prohibition order the members are also prohibited from spreading the characteristic 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e. V.' Hamburg (the deaths head patch) or using said characteristic publicly or in any meeting.

"The prohibition order against members of the proscribed association in respect of prohibited activities and characterisation applies also to other persons within the territory of the Federal Republic. Members of other chapters of the internationally organised 'Hell's Angels' thus render themselves liable to prosecution in the event of a breach of this proscription within Federal territory ...

"Prohibitive measures against criminal associations are subject to the discretionary decisions of the appropriate prohibition authority and are subject to examination only if the criminal actions committed by association members can be attributed to the association concerned. For understandable reasons I do not wish to comment publicly on possible proscription measures against other associations. I therefore prefer to make no comment on possible further association prohibitions."²⁷⁵

The said Prohibition Order reads as follows:

Bonn, 2nd November 1983

"Federal Minister for the Interior Dr Friedrich Zimmermann prohibits the criminal association 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' Hamburg.

"The prohibition ordered by the Federal Minister for the Interior in consultation with the Interior Ministers/Senators of the respective Lands against the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' Hamburg has today been served upon the association chairman in Hamburg and has thus taken effect.

"Execution of the association prohibition - searching of the club premises to secure the association assets - is to be carried out by the competent land authorities in Hamburg following service of the prohibition order.

"The 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' Hamburg is a criminal association whose object and activity - which extends to beyond the Hamburg area - is contrary to criminal law. Leading members of the association have committed numerous criminal acts of a nature corresponding to the object and purpose of the association, more specifically:

- procuring, encouragement of prostitution;
- demanding protection money with menaces; and
- illegal arms dealing.

"The Federal Minister for the Interior is thus exercising for the first time the possibility of prohibiting a criminal association. The activity of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' Hamburg is to be classified as within the area of organised crime. The association prohibition shows clearly that the organs of the State are taking decisive action against this area of crime with further statutory measures in addition to criminal prosecution.

"The State must exploit all possibilities, also after imprison-

ment of most members of the association on 10th August 1983, to counter violent and criminal emergence of the association in public ... The association can no longer be given formal state recognition based on its registration in the Register of Associations of the Hamburg District Court. Moreover, such persons and groups as may wish to associate or even identify with the association must be shown clearly that they are placing themselves in direct conflict with law and order."²⁷⁶

The accompanying banning order - issued under Section 3 of the Act governing the rights of public associations (Associations Act) of 5th August 1964, as amended 2nd March 1974 (an act originally implemented to curtail the activities and block the further growth of neo-fascist groups) - announced the implementation of the following decree:

- "1. The purpose and activity of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' ... run contrary to the criminal law.
2. The 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' ... has been banned. It is being disbanded.
3. The 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' ... is prohibited from performing any activity and from forming substitute organisations; similarly, its particular characteristics or identifying marks may neither be distributed nor used publicly or in a meeting or assembly.
4. The assets of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' ... shall be confiscated and seized.
5. The immediate execution of the decree is ordered ..." ²⁷⁷

Information contained within the subsections of the decree includes repeated references to the organisational structure of the motorcycle club as being of itself directly responsible for the multifarious criminal activities of its individual members.

Referring to the formal constitution of the German Hells Angels, Subsection 2, paragraph 2, makes the following allegations:

"In addition", it states, "to the rights and obligations of the club members set out in the constitution, there are - for the most part unwritten - rules governing the behaviour of club members. The obligations of the club members established outside the constitution derive, among other things, from the 'Laws of the Hell's Angels MC Germany'. According to these laws, the members are subject to the will of the majority. They are obliged to adhere to a certain 'code of honour', which in particular gives the interests of the individual member. The members must appear in their behaviour as 'outlaws', and are therefore obliged to contravene existing laws ... A member must make sure that the internal laws and punishments to be imposed are adhered to, as a so-called 'Sergeant at Arms'. The members are obliged to accept orders from this person or other leading members, without contradiction or opposition, and to follow them."²⁷⁸

(The preamble to Subsection 3 confirms the alleged criminal objectives of the motorcycle club:

"The purposes of the association stated in the constitution - preservation of two-wheeled motor sport, according to the principles of voluntary assistance and solidarity - has been advanced, and does not represent the actual conditions. Among the members of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club' it is frowned upon to take up a normal job ... The purpose and activity of the club were therefore devoted to committing punishable crimes. The criminal objectives of the association are determined by the leading members."²⁷⁹

And, as further 'proof' of the routine criminality conspiratorially engaged in by club members, Subsection 4, part II,

paragraph 1, states:

"(The) purpose and activity of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club e.V.' run counter to criminal law ... (because), according to the internal laws, the club members are obliged to attend a weekly meeting ... at a predetermined venue - generally the club room belong (sic) to the club premises 'Angel-Place'. The club premises served as a news gathering centre at which all messages received for members of the club were passed on. The activities planned and decided upon at the members' meetings are strictly implemented on the basis of a tight organisation. Decisions and resolutions must unconditionally be adhered to by club members. The purpose and aim of the club is to commit criminal acts prepared at gatherings and meetings. The club premises is itself the starting point for the criminal activities of the club ..."280

The remaining subsections of the decree continue along identical lines, identifying the various component parts of the internal structure of the club and using these as examples to establish its overall compatibility with the aims and objectives of an organised criminal group. Viz.:

"Leading full members of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club' have committed a number of criminal offences which served to earn income, and depending on their nature, are compatible with the aims and purposes of the club ..."281

"The criminal offences committed must be attributed to the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club' ... (because) the offences were committed in the knowledge and with the consent of the actual management of the club ..."282

For these reasons, the Minister of the Interior concludes, "(the) activities of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club', which are compatible with the actual purpose of the club, can no longer be

tolerated." 283

The Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is, he makes plain, an organisation which, "plans the committing of criminal offences in its club room, offences which are committed by the members of the club according to the predetermined plan. In doing so, the club takes advantage of its close relations with other associations and groupings in Germany and abroad. The club activity must be regarded as within the field of organised crime, and can only be prohibited by banning this club.

"Action which is any less trenchant than this will not suffice. A ban on the activities of the club could not effectively put a stop to the criminal intentions and purposes of the club and its associated activity. Since the criminal activity is an essential source of income for it and its members, it cannot be expected that the members will allow themselves to be prevented from committing further crimes by a ban on their activities.

"Prosecuting and sentencing club members - this has already been demonstrated in the past - have not been sufficient to stop the criminal activity of the club. Not even the expected conviction of the members for participation in a criminal association (Section 129 of the Penal Code) and further criminal offences would change the situation. Even though corresponding criminal activity is temporarily prevented whilst the full members are in prison, it must be assumed, in view of the close association of the club with a large number of other groupings, that the aims and activities, which offend against the penal code, will continue. According to the internal laws of the club, imprisoned members are supported by the club. This applies not only within the club but also in mutual relationships with other groups, and within the framework of international compulsory solidarity of the 'Hell's Angels'. Mainly financial support from club members who are not

imprisoned can only be given on the basis of crimes to be committed - as the essential source of income of the club and its members. Therefore, all forms of support for the imprisoned members, financial or otherwise, must also be included within the scope of the ban ...

"The prohibition of the activity, formation of substitute organisations and the distribution and use of identifying marks or emblems of the club among the general public, or in meetings is expressly forbidden ...

"The immediate execution of the ban, the disbanding of the 'Hell's Angels Motor-Club', and the confiscation of the club assets, is in the public interest ... It must be assumed that the club will intensify its attempts to continue its illegal activities to earn an income, through club members who are not imprisoned - and even through members of other 'Hell's Angels' groups or outside sympathisers and supporters. Effective proceedings against the club is therefore only possible if the execution of the ban is not postponed. It cannot be ruled out that various club assets and documents will be removed and later used to continue the criminal activity of the club.

"For the same reasons no prospects can be held out for a hearing of the participants ..."²⁸⁴

The banning order was implemented in the wake of the arrest and detention of fourteen of the fifteen members of the Hells Angels' Hamburg chapter (there are two chartered Hells Angel chapters in West Germany - Hamburg and Stuttgart) for a wide variety of alleged offences, ranging from assault on a bar owner through to the controlling of prostitutes, offences which if taken separately would not have been accorded anything but cursory interest from those not directly involved in the prosecution itself. However,

it was contended by the Minister of the Interior, without reference in the first instance to the provincial legislative body concerned, that owing to the scope of the crimes allegedly committed by 'leading members' of the Hamburg chapter (leading members are here defined as "so-called full-members") over a period of more than a decade (allegedly since their official incorporation into the Hells Angels in late 1971), combined with the tight-knit organisational structure of the club, were in themselves sufficient grounds for supposing that its primary purpose of existence was not as the Angels claimed in their registered constitution, the 'preservation of two-wheeled motor sport, according to the principles of voluntary assistance and solidarity', but an entity far more sinister, an organised criminal conspiracy impervious to normal legal sanctions.

It is interesting to note that, prior to the issuing of the ministerial decree, the West German press and, in particular, those newspapers owned by the Axel Springer Publishing Group, had been waging a sustained campaign highlighting the relatively recent proliferation of outlaw motorcycle clubs throughout the country, whose emergence, it posited, was synonymous with a decline in the moral values of German youth which had given rise to a succession of breaches of the peace at pop festivals and similar gatherings. Much was made of the contention that, despite their non-proven involvement in the troubles, the Angels, because of their symbolic standing as notorious, amoral lawbreakers within the overarching subculture, should be held to account for the adverse behavioural manifestations of their 'lesser bretheren'. The club's widely publicised deviant image fitted precisely the picture of juvenile lawlessness that the right wing of the German political spectrum were pointing to as the necessity for the tightening up of public order legislation, and thus they began to

routinely appear in the pages of Springer publications as a warning to the populace of the consequences of the government's failure to take decisive action to stem this supposed tide of lawlessness.

In this regard, the Angel's reputation for violence and mayhem, real or imagined, was elevated to such a lofty position that, even though their cases had yet to be brought to trial, they constituted a threat to the 'public interest' not far short of that posed by the Bader-Meinhoff group. The significant influence of Springer and his associates upon the policy-making processes of the government virtually ensured that the 'problem' would be tackled with zeal by the authorities, but it nevertheless came as a surprise to many when the Minister of the Interior chose to exercise his overriding constitutional powers to issue a banning order in line with emergency legislation originally drawn up to prevent a wholesale political incursion by right wing neo-nazi groups or, as amended, by left wing students. Significant too in the use of such legislation, was the fact that the relevant clauses of the act dealing with the a priori classification of such groups centred around the collective adoption of a unifying symbol, in the case of the neo-nazis the swastika and, in this case, the deaths head patch. This alone, the minister maintained, was a sufficient ground to expedite normal legal channels. What is perhaps just as interesting is that within six months of the issuing of the banning order against the Hells Angels, Dr. Zimmermann was accused, along with other prominent politicians, of accepting bribes from companies allied to the Springer Group in order to facilitate the placing of lucrative government contracts in their hands. Suffice to say that these leading members of the West German cabinet were not indicted as a conspiratorial criminal association.

The decree itself, which 'exercises for the first time the possibility of prohibiting a criminal organisation', contains scant reference to actual provable acts of criminality, but relies instead, as I have said, on the simple assertion that the club's organisational framework and its decision-making processes, albeit incorrectly interpreted, whether by accident or design, are overwhelmingly geared to 'the purpose and actively devoted to committing punishable crimes', although precisely why it is that such 'punishable crimes' are incapable of being dealt with under existing sanctions of criminal law is not evinced. Are we therefore to conclude that any organisation in society which exhibits certain organisational characteristics is per se to be suspected of 'planning the committing of criminal offences', which are committed by members of that organisation according to a predetermined plan? The criteria put forward by Dr. Zimmermann to lend substance to the accusation that the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club is a criminal association are as follows:

1. That the members of the club wear a distinctive symbol of their collective identity about their persons;
2. That the members adhere to the principles of democratic centralism - 'majority rule';
3. That the club has a 'code of rules governing the behaviour of individual members';
4. That internally agreed 'laws and punishments' are applied to errant members;
5. That an elected officer is responsible for ensuring that collective decisions are put into practice and, where necessary, appropriate sanctions applied;
6. That the club holds regular weekly meetings, at which 'activities are planned and decided upon, and subsequent decisions implemented';
7. That the club owns premises wherein such meetings are held and

which, coincidentally, serves as a 'news gathering centre at which all messages received for members are passed on';

8. That the club enjoys 'close relations with other associations at home and abroad';
9. That the club supports financially its members who are imprisoned;
10. That the club has 'outside sympathisers and supporters.'

I suggest, that if these same criteria wereto be randomly applied to organisations as diverse as the freemasons, the Association of University Teachers, the Boy Scouts or the darts team of the Red Lion Bier Kellar, we would have a veritable plethora of as yet undiscovered 'criminal associations' in our midst. And, if it were to be decreed a punishable offence for persons to 'frown upon taking a normal job' (always assuming that there is a normal job to be taken), or to 'appear in their behaviour as outlaws', then many millions of young, and indeed not so young, people the world over would be immediately suspect.

It was for these reasons that leading left wing members of the prestigious Faculty of Law at the University of Heidelberg decided to take up the cudgels on the Angels' behalf. Having been held incommunicado in one of West Germany's maximum security prisons, purpose-built to house convicted terrorists, twelve of the original defendants were at last brought to court amid a glare of publicity in November 1984. Uproar was caused on the very first day of the trial when a visiting Hells Angel from Holland, who was watching the proceedings from a seat in the public gallery, was ordered by the judge, Dr. Diethelm Erdmann, to be arrested and arraigned in the dock for the crime of wearing a T-shirt "displaying insignia advertising a criminal organisation." 285

As soon as the indictments had been read by the Hamburg State

Prosecutor, defence lawyers demanded an immediate adjournment on the grounds that the specially selected jury were likely to be biased from the outset. After several weeks of legal wrangling, a fresh jury was agreed by all parties and sworn in. Defence lawyers then claimed that the trial was unconstitutional because the clause of the penal code invoked against the Angels had been enacted by the German legislature as an extraordinary emergency measure with the sole intention of thwarting politically-active groups who by their actions threatened the security of the state and, as such, had been quite improperly brought under the circumstances. But, following another adjournment lasting several weeks, the application was overruled. The trial proper then commenced, with the prosecution attempting to establish a case on the basis of the volume of crimes alleged to have been committed by the defendants under the umbrella of club membership. Defence lawyers countered that, irrespective of either the number of charges or their relative severity, the real point at issue was one of civil liberties founded upon the inalienable right of free citizens to band together in an organisation for whatever aims or purposes they chose, with the proviso that those aims and purposes did not in themselves transgress the criminal law. .

Lawyer Bernd Niese freely admitted that the defendants were members "of an international brotherhood, where single members might possibly have committed a crime, as can happen in any group of people." 286

"The Hells Angels are," he added, "a bike club that originated in an American World War II military unit ... The accused are not criminals who hide behind society's coat-tails in order to get rich by profitting from the proceeds of crime, but individuals who consider their bikes the centre of their lives, lives that by virtue of the way they are lived are wholly incompatible with the

aims and purposes of organised crime ...

"The accusations are the result of politically motivated middleclass mistrust against the free way of life and the international brotherhood of the Hells Angels. Similar accusations have already been brought in the U.S.A. without success.

"With the special security measures and the masses of unnecessary prosecution files, the prosecution have created a psychological climate in Germany that automatically stamps the Hells Angels as criminals. In the past, other groups with their own way of life, have been viewed with equal mistrust; for example the freemasons."²⁸⁷

Furthermore, argued defence lawyers, it was not the Minister of the Interior who was the prime mover behind the implementation of the banning order, but the Federal Bureau of Investigation who, having failed to succeed in prosecuting the Angels in the two R.I.C.O. trials, had instead attempted to prove their case for an international criminal conspiracy by putting pressure on allied governments to take similar action. West Germany, it was alleged, had been selected for two reasons: firstly, because the country's constitutional arrangements allowed for extraordinary ministerial powers to be adopted in certain circumstances, circumventing the normal legislative process; and secondly, owing to the presence of massive numbers of American servicemen in the country for four decades, the F.B.I. and similar agencies had managed to build up a particularly close working relationship with their German counterparts, a relationship which afforded the former a degree of influence over policy decisions unsurpassed in the rest of Europe. Likewise, the Springer Press, avowedly pro-American in its views, was more than susceptible to gentle persuasion from the State Department aimed at creating a climate of public opinion favourable

to the adoption of otherwise contentious measures. Documentary evidence was put forward to substantiate these allegations, none of it conclusive, but sufficient to cast a shadow of doubt over the prosecution case. The trial rumbled on, peppered by complex legal submissions which held up proceedings for days at a time, and as it rumbled on the 'criminal association' charge began increasingly to take a back seat. The Angels, much to the embarrassment of the West German authorities, were rapidly turning into something of a cause celebre.

On April 4th., 1986, after nearly six months of costly legal wrangling at the very highest levels, the federal prosecutor walked into court and formally requested that all criminal conspiracy charges against the Hells Angels be dropped, and henceforth each of the twelve remaining defendants be tried separately. A month later, and three years after the incarceration of the Angels, the judge delivered his verdict, imprisoning eight of the defendants for periods from six months to seven years, with the result that all but two of the guilty men were immediately released on the grounds that they had already served their allotted punishments whilst on remand. The Ministry of the Interior promptly issued a press release stating that the authorities had delivered "a major blow against organised crime ... in West Germany."²⁸⁸

The banning order, which is still in force despite the ruling of the court that its implementation was 'inappropriate' and should have been referred to the Hamburg state legislature for prior approval, is to be the subject of a forthcoming hearing in the West German High Court in which it is confidently expected that it will be declared legally null and void. Meanwhile, the Hells Angels' Hamburg chapter continues to function much as before, albeit having changed the wording of the bottom rocker of their patches from 'Germany' to 'Hamburg', it continuing to be a criminal

offence to display the former as a 'club characteristic.'

As a result of this prolonged farce, the once internally divided West German outlaw motorcycle subculture, has achieved a degree of unity hitherto unprecedented. The influential sub-cultural magazine Bikers News, which is owned and distributed by the recently formed German Federation of Bike Clubs, has championed the Angels' cause throughout, viewing the ban as a political measure which, if unchallenged, could be extended in its scope to all patch-wearing clubs. They too see it as part of an overall campaign by international law enforcement agencies to use the Angels as a handy scapegoat in order to mask their ineffectiveness, or more probably their unwillingness, to tackle real organised criminal enterprises. In an editorial following the collapse of the prosecution's conspiracy case, Bikers News made this statement to its readership:

"For us, the grounds of action against the Hells Angels are to be found within the general political and economic situation, which is bad, as is generally known: and as no political or economic solution has been found, the state must point out its other successes in order to keep the voters in check ...

"In an article we published a few issues ago, we discussed the morality of the ban on the Hells Angels. The Hamburg Angels were then in prison and everybody expected them to be convicted on charges of forming a criminal organisation. Our ruling parties, C.D.U., C.S.U. and F.D.P., on the other hand, are not in prison, but in Parliament. And what they're waiting for is something quite different: a law through which both themselves and their accomplices are washed clean of any illegalities. The arguments which the establishment puts forward are ridiculous; their reactionary values have been exposed through their actions. Up until now, everything

that has been done against bikers has been legal and punishable (sic), but government crimes are not punishable. Parliament is supposed to guarantee the rights of citizens, not treat its members to a self-service shop ... Their crime concerns several million marks which have flowed into the enterprises (sic) of the ruling parties from camouflage organisations in order to evade tax. The money came from people who knew exactly what they were getting in return for these payments. And if it means that we have to become 'politrockers' (lit. political bikers) and have to mix with other political 'leatherjackets', in which left and right radicals have covered themselves, so be it ...

"... (if) the authorities ... succeed in their ban on the Hells Angels, then several other clubs in Germany will have to ensure that the same thing doesn't happen to them ... (The) Hamburg Angels spent over two years in detention, and the huge pile of evidence put before the court was still not enough to convict, and yet the ban continues. Who will be the next ones?

"Clubs on their own stand no chance of protecting themselves from such measures. The possibility is even less when they start beating each others' heads in. It is sad what has happened in the past, but we must now look to the future. Only we can bring our ideas to life."²⁸⁹

In West Germany, the politrockers are shaping themselves into a force to be reckoned with ...

It is perhaps an extraordinary notion to suggest that those who "must appear in their behaviour as 'outlaws'"²⁹⁰ are not necessarily "obliged to contravene existing laws"²⁹¹ in order to do so. Few people would imagine, when confronted in the street by a posse of leather-clad bikers, that those same individuals would

not shirk from committing the very worst forms of vile outrage in order to satisfy their perverted lusts. And, still fewer would be convinced that by far the majority of these alien monsters actually share a relatively normal nine-to-five existence with the rest of the working population. But, believe it or not, such is the case. They may well look tough, and usually are. They will use violence in defence of themselves, their patch or their fellow club members, if called upon to do so. They may involve themselves in a variety of activities, occasionally on a routine basis, which contravene the laws of the land. But, for all their apparent sins, outlaw motorcycle clubs par excellence are most definitely not professional criminal associations whose aims and objectives are "devoted to committing punishable crime".²⁹²

In fact, the older-established clubs like the Hells Angels take considerable pains to distance themselves from 'ordinary villains' who, being outside the brotherhood and thus not subject to its collective sanctions, are regarded with suspicion alongside everybody else in the wider society. That is not to say that individual club members are not to be seen in the company of underworld characters of varying professional inclinations, merely that such attachments are either of a transitory, purely instrumental nature, or else take the form of casual drinking company. In either case, the interests of the club always assume an absolute priority, even if that means the likelihood of violent conflict with gentlemen whom others would prefer to appease. In reality though, such conflict rarely surfaces, the bikers preferring to exercise their leisure hours in their own pubs or clubhouses, their manner of attire and general demeanour being unconducive to the kinds of establishments favoured by be-suited villains. This arm's length relationship does not of course preclude the odd 'bit of business', whenever mutually beneficial deals can be arranged, but

in the main the two subcultures are worlds apart.

Unlike professional criminals, it is not frowned upon in biker circles for outlaw motorcycle club members to take a normal job. The necessity of having a regular income in order to keep abreast of club financial commitments - weekly subs, keeping the bike on the road in tip top condition, going on runs, defence fund contributions, etc., etc. - is paramount and, sooner or later, dictates that even the most recalcitrant outlaw is forced to spurn the more lucrative, but infinitely more precarious, rewards available to him through criminal channels. He may well continue to exploit his former underworld colleagues to a greater or lesser extent, particularly where the forms of criminality involved have strong subcultural connotations, as in the purchase of quantities of amphetamine sulphate or cannabis for distribution to friends and associates, but otherwise contact is minimal.

Furthermore, the outlaw by virtue of his very public persona - his penchant for readily identifiable forms of apparel which advertise in no uncertain terms both his particular club allegiance and its place of origin, together with his choice of transport - is hardly guaranteed the high degree of anonymity understandably favoured by the professional criminal fraternity. In a crowd, however cosmopolitan in composition, the outlaw is immediately recognisable, and his extreme reluctance to compromise by shedding his club colours for whatever reason, severely restricts his ability to mix freely in surroundings where he might otherwise profit, criminally or indeed quite legitimately. And, because of the day to day obligations dictated by club membership - the necessity to attend weekly meetings at the clubhouse and to mix on a routine basis with fellow club members - the outlaw biker is also required to reside at a permanent address where he may be speedily contacted day or night. Every club, large or small, has

its own very clearly defined area of territorial suzerainty, within the boundaries of which members must live, still further restricting their chances of their presence in the locality being overlooked by the police. In the main, outlaw bikers tend to make no secret of their presence, preferring an up-fronted approach to the world, however adverse a reaction this policy might bring down upon their heads. Witness the recent spate of publicity in the national media surrounding the appearance of the Hells Angels' Windsor chapter's clubhouse in a predominantly middle class area of the Royal borough. In spite of the public outcry and resulting visits from the police, the Windsor Angels resolutely refuse to move, preferring to take their chances rather than be seen to be backing down. Such behaviour clashes strongly with Taylor's contention that professional villains as a genre, "do not go in for self-advertisement ..., (and) are unlikely to have a telephone, cheque book, credit card or any involvement in the national insurance or taxation system which might require some indication of residence."²⁹³

True, outlaw motorcycle club members, in common with ninety-nine per cent of the population, don't exactly fall over themselves to fill out their tax returns, wherever it is possible to avoid doing so, but in terms of the possession of telephones, cheque books, vehicle log books and other assorted traceable paraphernalia of modern bureaucratic life, they make little or no attempt at concealment. Besides which, every minute detail of club membership - names, nick-names, addresses, telephone numbers, financial standing and attendance at meetings - are recorded with fastidious accuracy in either the secretary's membership/minutes book or the treasurer's subs book, both of which are regularly netted during raids by police, and whose contents, as a consequence, doubtless occupy several miles of computer tape at the Criminal Records Office

Of the seventeen-strong Hells Angels chapter that I studied over a period of three years, over seventy-five per cent of the membership were employed in full time, long-term occupations - usually skilled or semi-skilled white or blue collar jobs, or forms of self-employment predominantly concerned with motorcycling in some way (e.g. bike breaking, mechanical repairs, chopper building, welding, spraying, leather work, dispatching, etc., etc.) - and, of the remainder, only two could be said to earn their livelihoods from the proceeds of criminal activity - one via the distribution of soft drugs and the other by stealing late-model cars to order for a 'respectable' motor trader. Those that did work irregularly, whether because of the seasonal nature of building work or merely because they chose to take the summer months off to take advantage of the good riding weather, would dabble in anything that came their way, legal, illegal or simply beyond the ken of the tax man. Their income, when they were not in debt, took the form of 'deals' of an indefinite nature, generally involving commodities which could be easily acquired and disposed of within the immediate subculture. Smallscale drugs distribution was the favourite, cannabis and amphetamine sulphate being not too difficult to obtain, carry about the person (particularly the latter) or find a ready market for. Neither heroin, its derivatives or substitutes, nor cocaine were favoured, however, the former being specifically banned under club rules, its use strongly frowned upon throughout the subculture - smack dealers operating in the vicinity were vulnerable to the Angels' style of 'community policing' if caught out - and the latter, being too expensive to buy or sell, although the odd gramme of coke for personal use didn't go amiss.

Motor vehicle theft, to a far lesser extent, was also a lucrative part-time earner. Cars and commercial vehicles could

be passed on to reputable dealers who preferred not to do their own dirty work, and motorcycles - custom machines excluded - could be relatively easily lifted from their owners and recycled (rung) for sale to an unsuspecting punter. But, as far as such activities being of an organised nature, both the police and press are whistling in the dark. In neither instance, would the quantities involved, the professionalism of the operation, or the amount of remuneration, justify the label 'organised crime'. Besides which, such criminal activities as were carried out were, to a great extent, undertaken on an unplanned, intermittent basis, as and when the individual or individuals concerned needed the money or, if on rare occasions, a deal came along that 'simply couldn't be refused'.

Furthermore, these private deals were expressly excluded from being discussed at club meetings, not because of any sense of paranoia on the part of the membership, but because such matters were not considered legitimate club business to be included on the agenda alongside more pressing issues concerning the day to day collective administration of an outlaw motorcycle club. This is a particularly important point, in view of the fact that by far the most potent accusation levelled at the outlaw motorcycle subculture in support of the organised crime theory is that the conspiratorial nature of the outlaw club, revolving as it does around an ongoing pattern of closed weekly meetings, is of itself sufficient grounds to suppose that those "offences which are committed by the members of the club (are conceived in the club room) according to the predetermined plan".²⁹⁴ It is, on the contrary, this very process of collective organisation that serves to counter the allegation that outlaw clubs are characterised by an hierarchical decision-making structure, within which the president and other 'leading members' wield absolute power over their subordinates forcing them to perform criminal acts on their behalf.

Surprising as it may sound, individuals with an active criminal past who gain entry to outlaw clubs, are positively discouraged from involving themselves in nefarious activities which might backfire putting their liberty in jeopardy and, ultimately, threatening the collective security of the whole. Only very occasionally is a well-trusted member provided with the money required to make an illegal transaction, and then only on the strict condition that if for some reason it goes awry, he has sufficient collateral to cover the debt. Much more often, individuals are loaned money to enable to set themselves up in some sort of approved legitimate or semi-legitimate business, usually in the bike trade. This is considered to be an infinitely better long-term investment, both because it ensures the individual concerned's freedom from possible incarceration as well as giving him a regular source of income with which he is able to maintain his financial commitment to the club over a prolonged period. Likewise, the meeting may well vote to launch a money-making venture like the Kent Custom Bike Show, a rock concert, club-owned custom shop, motorcycle breakers yard, T-shirt business, or some other subculturally related enterprise. Such projects, apart from boosting the club's funds and enhancing the club's reputation vis-a-vis its peers, also serve to employ otherwise unemployable members for several months of the year. Some clubs will deliberately play upon their reputation as 'hard men' by arranging to provide discos or night clubs with 'security personnel' who, because of their physical prowess and, more importantly, the threat of severe retribution from the rest of their club, rarely encounter trouble. Again, the venues selected for these operations are predominantly within the bounds of the parent subculture, minimising the risk of confrontation with other interests.

Nevertheless, however strong the evidence may be to refute the

allegation that outlaw motorcycle clubs can be cast in the same conceptual mould as traditional organised crime syndicates, it would be absurdly naive to conclude that outlaw bikers are, as a collectively, noted for their painstaking adherence to the laws of the land. The rationale for the apparently cautious behaviour described above is very far from an implicit belief in the sanctity of the criminal justice system, but is rather a well-considered policy developed over a period of years to defend the interests of the club, over and above the secular criminal interests of particular members. Indeed, it is exceedingly rare for outlaw motorcycle club members not to have criminal records, and a high percentage of individuals experience at least one term of imprisonment in the course of their subcultural careers, that likelihood being increased considerably for the members of the more hardcore one-percenter clubs. Again, of the seventeen Hells Angels members that I studied, nine had served custodial sentences for a variety of crimes including possession of drugs, offensive weapons, stolen motorcycles and forms of violence as serious as affray and riotous assembly, the last of these affording the club president a period of five years behind bars. These crimes, however, fall in the main into two broadly distinct categories, both of which reflect clearly defined patterns of conduct appropriate to the behavioural exigencies endemic to the overarching subculture.

The first of these categories concerns the aforementioned involvement in drug dealing and motorcycle theft. Not only are such criminal activities looked upon as perfectly 'legitimate' forms of income for those who would otherwise suffer financial hardship and hence be precluded from fulfilling their subcultural obligations; but participation, however marginal, is virtually de rigeur for outlaw bikers, club members or otherwise. In regard to dope smoking, this can for the most part be explained by the

strong thread of continuity which exists between contemporary bikers and their sixties-conditioned antecedents whose drug taking habits were formed in accord with those of their hippie mentors. Thus, the consumption of marijuana, and to a lesser extent L.S.D., is regarded alongside alcohol as being an eminently acceptable form of activity at any biker gathering, with the result that there is a ready trade to be pursued with a minimum of risk for those enterprising souls with the right connections. Such dealers though rarely ply their trade beyond the self-constructed boundaries of the subculture, preferring to maintain a steady income rather than run the risk of exposure to the police by outsiders. They see themselves as performing a useful social service with the tacit approval of their peers, smokers and non-smokers, and seldom aspire to large-scale drugs distribution which would necessitate the compromising of their subcultural identity in pursuit of increased profits. Furthermore, as indicated earlier, they are extremely loathe to do business with the purveyors of drugs which conflict with the expressed interests of the subcultural nexus. Heroin, and indeed any drug associated with the use of syringes, is strictly taboo, its dealers being regarded with a sense of righteous indignation and its users as pathetic and contemptable 'junkies' who, in a tight spot, would 'grass up their own mothers'. This again limits the scope of the aspirant dealer for growth within the subculture, transgressors being subject to collective extra-legal sanctions of a very severe nature.

In the latter half of the 1970s, in line with trends in the United States, amphetamine sulphate (speed) became a subculturally approved drug. Amphetamines, more commonly in the form of pills - purple hearts, French blues, dexies, black bombers - had hitherto been frowned upon by the British biker subculture who associated their use with their traditional arch-rivals, the mods, but the

popularisation of the drug in powder form as a substance associated with the lifestyle of 'real outlaw bikers' as portrayed in the pages of imported magazines like Easyriders gradually overcame initial reservations. Although nowhere as near widespread as the consumption of marijuana, the use of speed is relatively commonplace amongst members of clubs at the hardcore end of the spectrum, where participants at subcultural functions are expected to stay on their feet for long periods of time having consumed large amounts of alcohol. 'Crashing', or falling asleep during the course of a party or run, has always been considered virulently un-macho amongst outlaw bikers, those caught out being subject to a rude awakening at the hands of their fellow club members, who would take a delight in urinating on or setting alight to their sleeping forms. Thus, the arrival on the scene of a drug which was both fashionable and functional, and easily concealed about the person or the bike, was very welcome in some quarters.

Like marijuana, speed is generally considered to be non-physically addictive and therefore more acceptable than drugs which reduce the user to the position of a dependent victim whose will, and indeed liberty, is in the hands of others. True, the abuse of speed has also claimed its fair share of victims amongst club members, whose psychological addiction heralded a withdrawal from club activities, prompting the implementation of collective sanctions against the individuals concerned, usually in the form of a ban on continued usage or, in the extreme, expulsion from membership. In such cases, however, it is generally held to be the fault of the individual for getting himself too deeply involved, rather than any deficiency in the drug itself. Nonetheless, the loss of brothers through amphetamine abuse has had a salutary effect on the one-percenter clubs, whose members are nowadays less inclined towards indiscriminate 'speeding' and restrict their

consumption to the more important subcultural events in the club calendar, where it would be considered passe to crash out in the middle of the proceedings.

As far as its role as a source of income is concerned, powdered amphetamine sulphate has, for obvious reasons, a much greater appeal than marijuana, which is both bulkier and considerably less remunerative. It can, if so desired, be adulterated or 'cut' with other substances in order to decrease its strength and hence increase its profitability, although this is rarely done by biker dealers whose market is regular and limited, and whose clientele would not take kindly to being ripped off. Like marijuana, speed is bought in bulk from external sources and marketed almost exclusively in subcultural circles, where non-biker dealers are either disinclined or discouraged to pedal their wares. Occasionally though, biker dealers will sell to outsiders who are specially recommended to them by brothers as being trustworthy, and in such cases it is considered a point of honour to give a fair deal. Casual sales, however, are almost always discouraged, even in circumstances where a ready profit could be gained with the minimum of effort, long term 'security' considerations outweighing short term individual interests. Because of the relatively regular, risk free nature of the enterprise, some biker dealers make a very good living out of speed, but their income is substantially offset by the acknowledged custom of giving away free deals to brothers at club functions, a custom which ensures continued goodwill and guarantees anonymity in the event of the arrest of a customer.

Whatever the extent of drug dealing within the outlaw motorcycle subculture, whatever the quantities involved, there is virtually no overspill into the wider drug culture except where initial suppliers have to be contacted. Those who take drugs, of any variety, on an habitual basis, are considered persona non

grata, their company to be avoided wherever possible. And, whilst drugs have an important role to play in the social milieu of the subculture, they are held to be a long way down the scale of importance compared with custom motorcycles and other associated 'necessities' of life, and woe betide any brother who allows either drug consumption or drug dealing to assume a priority over his obligations to his club. Such reservations apply equally to the other form of criminal activity endemic to the biker subculture - the theft of motorcycles and motorcycle parts.

Here too, there is to be found a curiously ambiguous attitude towards those overtly involved in the actual commission of the crime. Although the pages of influential subcultural magazines like Easyriders and Biker-Lifestyle make repeated reference to the 'skunks and snakes' who stoop so low as to steal other people's wheels, and bikers, in public at any rate, are wont to mouth violent epithets concerning the kinds of vengeance they would, if given the opportunity, wreak on the perpetrators of such despicable acts, the practice is tacitly regarded as 'legitimate' so long as it is restricted to non-customised machines which, it is reasoned, can be replaced on insurance. It is perhaps significant that while the sales of new motorcycles continue to plummet, breakers' yards and the secondhand parts market in general are booming as never before. The problem, it appears, stems from the disproportionately high cost of replacement parts demanded by the manufacturers in the event of an accident or mechanical disaster. Modern Japanese machines, whose sales go to make up the vast bulk of the market, have developed technologically to such an extent that their sophistication and longevity has rebounded financially on their purveyors. Competition in a contracting market is so keen that in order to sell more models, the older ones must somehow be put off the road, hence the scant availability of new

new parts and their artificially inflated cost.

It is at this point, where the victim of an expensive mechanised malfunction is faced with the unenviable option of paying out more than the bike is worth in repairs of leaving the central plank of his subcultural identity rotting in the garage, that the less legitimate and considerably cheaper alternative sources of supply lose their stigma. For some, the routine theft of machines for supply to 'no questions asked' breakers becomes a handy way of earning a living. The rewards of such 'midnight deals' are low, but the practice is well-orchestrated and payment guaranteed. Late-model bikes with a high spares value are ridden away or picked up in vans and delivered direct to 'respectable' dealers who strip them down and dispose of traceable identification numbers or sell them complete to less than scrupulous race competitors, where their presence on the track affords little suspicion.

More usually, however, motorcycle theft as practised by members of the outlaw subculture takes the predominant form of casual 'theft to order' for the supply of parts to acknowledged 'friends in need' and others who, through the grapevine, are known to be 'on the lookout' for something specific. In these cases, more common at the hardcore end of the spectrum, the stolen motorcycles are stripped down and pirated for spares by several people working in concord. The recipients then either use the parts themselves or trade them off to others further down the ladder for money or custom parts with which to adorn their own machines. In this manner, stolen parts percolate their way through the subculture, benefiting even those who, whilst they would not themselves condone the original act of theft, turn a very blind eye to the likely source of the acquisition.

Occasionally, where the relevant vehicle licensing documents

can be made available, stolen motorcycles will be left intact, 'rung' (have their vehicle identification numbers altered) and resold to unsuspecting, or uncaring, buyers as legal machines. But this practice, once widespread, is becoming increasingly rare as computerisation of vehicle records and the introduction of a special Q-registration system in 1979 accelerated the risk of getting caught beyond tolerable levels. (Prior to this date, a 'rebuilt' vehicle could be registered in a straightforward manner at any regional motor vehicle licensing centre and receive a current registration number for the year in question. Since then, however, all vehicles not provably constructed from new parts are obliged to bear a Q prefix registration number indicating reregistration). This has meant that, rightly or wrongly, the police have adopted the practice of impounding Q-registration motorcycles, particularly the extensively reworked, hand-built choppers belonging to the outlaw fraternity, on 'suspicion of stolen parts'. Their return, usually many months later, minus detachable, expensive to replace bits and pieces, paintwork scratched and covered in rust from exposure to the elements in a police compound, has drastically curtailed the outlaw's inclination to put a new bike on the road 'on the cheap'. Ringing still goes on, but it is largely restricted to professional thieves with access to motorcycle retail outlets and a ready supply of log books from written off vehicles. The motorcycles involved are invariably standard specification, late model Japanese road race replicas that command a sufficiently high resale value to warrant the risks incurred. Others are exported to the Continent in commercial containers alongside legitimate cargo, having been reduced to their major component parts, to be reassembled on delivery. This obviates the need for restamping as foreign registration papers can be obtained with the production of the necessary export licences. Such trade is highly remunerative, but

also demands very sophisticated organisational arrangements well beyond the scope of the average outlaw club, whose members more often than not experience difficulties crossing national borders upon their own, legal, motorcycles.

Motorcycle theft, in common with low-level drugs dealing, is undeniably a routine form of criminal activity within the outlaw motorcycle subculture. Again, it is not entered into on a professional basis primarily as a source of profit, but rather performs a two-fold subcultural function, enabling the individual or individuals concerned to meet day to day financial needs as well as providing the necessary parts to keep otherwise unaffordable machines on the road. Neither is it organised along club lines - although club membership does provide relatively risk free access to customers whilst at the same time generating a demand - but is carried out by individuals or regular partnerships who possess both the skill and the audacity to pull it off. Outlaw-owned bikes are themselves seldom the target for thieves, partly for fear of retribution if the culprit were to be brought to light, but more particularly because one-of-a-kind, custom-built choppers are so readily identifiable to the cognoscenti as to render them virtually unsaleable in the market place. There is also the important question of honour involved here: outlaws who would not hesitate to lift a 'wally's' brand new mount from under his nose, would most assuredly balk at the very idea of stealing and stripping for parts a fellow outlaw's chopper, no matter what he may think of him personally and, thief or not, would be outraged if the latter were to contemplate stealing his own machine. Their chosen victims, although themselves motorcyclists, almost always fall outside the inner world of the outlaw, and as a consequence do not merit such noble consideration, and anyway, 'The insurance companies are all robbing bastards, aren't they?'.

The second major category of crime publicly ascribed to the outlaw motorcycle fraternity by the police and the media concerns the allegedly ritualised acts of violence performed by members of outlaw clubs. Every newspaperman is aware that an otherwise lacklustre piece of copy involving motorcycle riders can be beefed up by reference to the participants as 'Hells Angels', with all the connotations that such a label brings to mind. And, even the most deadly dull television soap opera is capable of having life breathed into it by the timely appearance on set of a bunch of rough looking, leather-jacketed, chain-wielding thugs, bent on doing injury to a much loved cast. Particularly brutal murder suspects are surprisingly often 'discovered' to have been members of, or associated with, a 'Hells Angels gang' in their youth, this 'fact' alone being sufficient to invite a God-fearing jury to return a guilty verdict. A millionaire stockbroker who decapitated his wife and hid the body in the freezer, was said to have, "pulled on his leathers and roared along motorways ... with Satan's Slaves - Britain's most feared Hell's Angels chapter";²⁹⁵ an Essex businessman convicted of hiring a gunman to shoot his wife, was alleged to be part of a "Hell's Angel 'Hit Team'";²⁹⁶ a child sex murderer with a string of previous convictions, was described as having served his criminal apprenticeship as "a paid-up delinquent, playing truant from school and going on drink and drug binges with a crowd of Hells Angels";²⁹⁷ three West London men who terrorised a vicar and raped his daughter, were said by the police officer in charge of the hunt, to have "a possible link with a Hell's Angels gang called Spider's Web";²⁹⁸ the attacker who gunned down P.C. Philip Olds, an Old Bailey jury was told, "was a member of a violent Hell's Angels gang";²⁹⁹ and so on ad infinitum.

When fighting broke out during a scooter rally on the Isle

of Wight over the 1986 August bank holiday weekend, the British press, entirely without foundation, stated that: "the gatecrashers (who, according to reports, provoked the 'riot'), called themselves Hell's Angels."³⁰⁰ The Guardian, in an apparent search for a serious sociological explanation with which to impress its readership, described these self-confessed folk devils, none of whom appeared amongst the twenty-four persons arrested by police, as "traditional enemies of scooterists".³⁰¹ When challenged as to the accuracy of his account, however, the journalist concerned freely admitted that he had not been present to witness the proceedings and neither had he the slightest idea who was actually fighting whom or for what reason.

Such reports are far from untypical, conditioned as they are by two decades of 'informed opinion' concerning the violent tendencies of outlaw bikers. In my files of press cuttings on the subject, culled from national newspapers and periodicals over a period of four years, I find no less than 482 specific references to "Hells Angels gang violence", ninety per cent of which is attributable to individuals other than the genuine article who happen to ride motorcycles as a means of transport or, almost as often, don't ride motorcycles at all, but merely look as though they might do. And, of the accounts that correctly name the Angels or similar outlaw clubs as the guilty party, the vast majority deal with incidents which, if they did not involve Hells Angels, would not warrant a single column inch of news space, let alone the sort of banner headlines which normally accompany them.

Television too, has amply demonstrated to the viewer just how great the threat to life and limb might be were he or she to inadvertently offend a passing biker. In the past four years, the most unlikely looking 'Hells Angels' have popped up in a wide

variety of popular T.V. series to add a touch of villainous street cred to ailing scripts. In case the viewer is left in doubt as to their identity, these characters appear dressed in the garb universally foisted upon them by middle class costume designers - regulation issue chrome plated Nazi helmet, studded leather jacket and row upon row of jangling chains. Swastikas are also usually well to the fore, as if to further reinforce the evil that lurks beneath the surface. Such appearances never fail to occasion a great deal of merriment amongst real outlaw bikers, who are probably the only section of the viewing public who don't recognise their own image on the screen.

The last twelve months alone have produced a whole spate of prime-time television programmes, with an audience of millions, that have unashamedly stereotyped bikers as antisocial thugs. First there was the Scottish T.V. mini-series Taggart, all about tough detectives discovering bits and pieces of dismembered body all over the place, in the course of which (according to the T.V. Times) a "chapter of real Hell's Angels",³⁰² replete with the obligatory chrome German helmets and chains, were quite spuriously introduced into the plot to add a bit of 'fun' to the proceedings. There was much talk about 'codes of silence' and 'ritual grave desecration', but no real violence. Then there was the failed soap opera Albion Market, where the local leather-jacketed brigade were depicted as crypto-fascist arsonists who took a positive delight in harassing immigrant families. In Channel Four's son-of-Minder series, Prospects, outlaw biker types smashed up a public house and attacked defenceless campers. Ditto, Southern Television's Cat's Eyes, in which the public house was replaced by a transport cafe and the campers by hippies. In a genteel little series about zoo vets, they smashed up yet another pub, besides terrorising the inhabitants of a sleepy English village, knocking

middle-aged women off bicycles and ripping up flower beds. The staff of Crossroads Motel were besieged by bike-borne vandals, likewise the residents of Emmerdale Farm. Lenny Henry, in what was intended to pass as comedy, was chased by a pair of psychopathic 'Hells Angels', again sporting Nazi helmets and swastikas. American imports The Fall Guy and CHIPS featured fully fledged bike gangs in pursuit of the heroes, as did the Clint Eastwood movie Every Which Way But Loose. Channel Four offered us Kenneth Anger's pretentious, made-for-gays, sixties short, Scorpio Rising, complete with a healthy dose of chains, whips, ritual buggery, and other trappings of sado-masochism. And, on radio, even the dear old Archers were aghast as fighting 'Hells Angels' brought mayhem and destruction to Ambridge. Small wonder that the majority of the population feel intimidated by the very presence of bikers in their vicinity, violent or otherwise. Is this then merely unfounded paranoia fueled by the media, or is it an image which, at base, springs from reality?

Nobody, least of all bikers themselves, would seriously propound the theory that the violent image much beloved by the media has absolutely no foundation in real life. Indeed, as has been pointed out in the course of this thesis, violence, and on occasions extreme violence, has punctuated the history of the outlaw motorcycle subculture. In Britain, the major set-piece battles between outlaw clubs have attracted blanket coverage in the national press - Chelsea Bridge (1971), the New Forest (1979), Cookham (1983), Leamington Spa (1986) - all have produced headlines worthy of minor foreign wars, and yet, with the exception of the subcultural origins of the combatants, have been no more serious in terms of either the numbers involved or the extent of the injuries inflicted, than many other violent fracas that have occurred on the streets of this country in the past fifteen years. True, two

members of the Road Rats were stabbed to death during 'The Battle of Cookham Wood', but then deaths by stabbing, although not commonplace, are not sufficiently rare an occurrence to warrant the massive publicity accorded over a period of months to these particular stabbings. And, when on the three occasions that firearms have been used, could it be said that the general public have been so threatened that the police and courts have justifiably dealt with the accused in a manner more usually reserved for professional gunmen or members of the I.R.A.?

When, in the immediate wake of the latest of these four inter-club battles - that which occurred in May 1986 between the Warwickshire and Northamptonshire-based Pagans chapters and their East Coast rivals, the Outcasts - I spoke to people, bikers and non-bikers alike, who were acquainted with the Warwickshire Pagans, many found it difficult to believe that the reports that they had read in their morning papers, apart from the most basic geographical facts (and even these were wrong in some cases), had the slightest relevance to the members of their local outlaw club. So extravagant, so highly coloured, so shrouded in myth, was the icing heaped by the media upon a cake which, under closer, more sober scrutiny, might have merited a passing mention on the regional news, that what the residents of a quiet side street in Leamington Spa viewed as a relatively minor inconvenience losing them a couple of hours sleep at the most, was turned into a matter of national importance. The ingredient which separated this particular street fight from any other street fight up and down the land, catapulting a previously obscure pair of provincial motorcycle clubs into national prominence was the catchword on the lips of every copy-hungry journalist eager for a story - that catchword, HELLS ANGELS.

Such is the potency of the image conjured up by the applic-

ation of the description Hells Angels to the combatants in any affray that it is of itself sufficient to transform an otherwise quite easily understood manifestation of conflict between two groups of people into a phenomenon which is alien, frightening and utterly ununderstandable. In this particular instance, there was noise, there was fighting, there were injuries, although relatively minor, there were arrests, and there was a measure of disruption occasioned to neighbours, but the magnitude of the conflict was entirely disproportionate to the response of the media. 'BOMB TERROR IN ANGELS BATTLE', 'ANGELS IN PETROL BOMB BATTLE', 'FIRE ATTACK ON ANGELS', 'HELL BOMB TERROR', 'HELLS ANGELS IN VENDETTA OF DEATH', the headline writers were working overtime to outdo each other in superlatives. And, if the words at the top of the page sensationalised, then the content of the accompanying reports added a conspiratorial mystique guaranteed to keep the pot on the boil for several weeks in the future. Self-styled 'experts' from both the police and individual newspapers suddenly appeared on the scene to expound their knowledge of the background moves which had led to this outbreak of violence. Although, initially, none of these 'experts' could as much as accurately name the chapters involved, all were in complete agreement that what had taken place had been at the instigation of mysterious figures higher up in the 'Hells Angels' hierarchy. Detective Chief Inspector French of Leamington Spa police felt confident enough to assert to the Daily Express that: "It appears to be a territorial dispute between two rival factions ... (But) nationally there seems to be a move to try to force the Outcasts to join the main Hell's Angels organisation." 303 And an unnamed 'senior officer' told the Birmingham Post: "It would appear a large stone has been overturned by the Leamington incident and a lot of worms are underneath it." 304

In spite of the fact that the Warwickshire police had arr-

ested, and continued to hold in custody, all but a handful of the total memberships of the two clubs involved, and knew well that the scope of the violence was limited to those alone, they continued to issue dire warnings to the press concerning the likelihood of 'revenge attacks' by 'Hell's Angels gangs' across the country. On May 26th, 1986, three weeks after the incident, with virtually all the combatants behind bars, a hundred detectives from five police forces set up a "combined operation to combat violent Hell's Angels gang attacks".³⁰⁵ The Daily Telegraph was particularly forthcoming on the subject:

"Called Operation Biker, the intelligence and monitoring exercise is", wrote the Telegraph's resident 'expert' David Graves, "based at Northampton, and involves officers from Northamptonshire, Leicestershire, Warwickshire, Norfolk and Kent.

"A watch was mounted over the Bank Holiday weekend at coastal and inland sites of traditional holiday gatherings of the biker fraternity. (I myself was stopped by police on the Bank Holiday weekend in question whilst travelling with two companions aboard motorcycles on the seafront in Bognor Regis, many miles from the scene of the Warwickshire conflict, and questioned as to whether we were on our way to a 'gang war'.) ...

"A police spokesman said yesterday: "We are collating information about Hell's Angels and I expect other forces will contact us if they have incidents involving them!"³⁰⁶

The Telegraph's 'expert' then proceeds to put forward his own theory on the rationale behind Operation Biker, stating that:

"The upsurge in violence is believed to be connected with attempts to form an All-England Chapter of Hell's Angels to unite the country's motorcycle gangs.

"But some bikers, including chapters in Northampton and Windsor are said to be violently against the idea ..." ³⁰⁷

This positively Machievellian approach to the subject of outlaw bikers has become increasingly typical in recent years as the old image of 'Hells Angels gangs' as anarchic bunches of indiscriminately violent, drug-filled crazies gives way to the new improved, American-imported image of the genre as sophisticated organised conspiracies - power-hungry corporations bent on either swallowing up or destroying their rivals. The 'All-England' tag, foisted upon the then seven chapters comprising the Hells Angels England by the press following the New Forest fracas, is now routinely used to convey the impression that the Hells Angels intend to 'take over the country' and, in the process, eliminate anybody who gets in their way. In fact, nothing could be further from the truth. Whatever the rhetoric bandied about at the time to 'explain' the Pagans/Outcasts debacle, the 'manipulating hand' of the Hells Angels played absolutely no part in the affair, the Angels' interest becoming aroused solely by the wildly inaccurate reports concerning their involvement.

It would, of course, be absurd to deny that inter-club conflict exists. Bloody battles have taken place from time to time in the course of which three people have met their deaths and several others have been seriously injured, and however extravagant the overarching motives that the media have invented to provide an explanation or framework within which to locate these violent subcultural outbursts, there is certainly no explaining away the fact that internecine violence has to a great extent characterised the formation of the outlaw motorcycle subculture in Britain and indeed throughout the world.

The sorts of highly-stylised clashes, involving large numbers of combatants, which attract the glare of publicity, are rare, inter-club confrontation overwhelmingly taking the form of minor skirmishes as and when members of rival chapters have the misfo-

rtune to accidentally bump into one another. Notions of planned expansionism and conquest have little or nothing to do with it, one-percenter clubs nowadays being almost universally content to consolidate their already established chapters and avoid conflict, where possible, with potential enemies. In spite of their 1979 battle in the New Forest with the renegade Windsor chapter, the England Angels have in fact only been engaged in reincorporating into the official organisation the existing Hells Angels clubs, and have made no significant move towards recruiting other clubs, many of whom would like to join but are turned away. Those unaligned outlaw clubs who, as in the case of the Nottinghamshire/Lincolnshire-based Mofos, wish to be considered for membership, are fully expected to make all the running, and others who, like the Lancashire, Yorkshire and Devon-based Satans Slaves, wish to remain independent, are studiously ignored. Where conflict does arise, it is generally restricted to those less well subculturally versed chapters who infringe the Angels' and similar more powerful clubs' monopoly on the wearing of well-established designs of back patch. For instance, the Hells Angels, in England at least, have a widely acknowledged right of exclusivity to the use of red on white colours, and will arbitrarily strip the patches from the backs of those who offend, by force if necessary. This extends to the unsanctioned wearing of the central deaths head symbol and the name Hells Angels, both of which are in any case legally copyrighted. These same strictures apply to infringements of other one-percenter clubs' right of monopoly over their respective colours/back patch designs, strictures which are understood throughout the subculture and almost universally respected.

On occasions, however, clubs will arrive on the scene who are either ignorant of, or prepared to ignore, the consequences

of breaking the rules and, in such cases, they will be dealt with by the offended party in an appropriate manner. Generally though, because of the geographical problems involved and the ever present threat of police intervention, head-on confrontation is avoided, and the malfactors discouraged to continue their infringement by negotiation. This sort of situation has increasingly become a rarity as major subcultural gatherings like the Kent Custom Show have brought a diversity of outlaw clubs into face to face contact with one another, obviating the likelihood of misunderstandings leading to conflict, as well as the advent of authoritative biker magazines like Easyriders and Back Street Heroes whose pages define what is and what is not considered to be acceptable behaviour. Thus, clubs who might once have donned 'Hells Angels' back patches unofficially in order to impress a local audience, would now always be subject to peer group ridicule or ostracisation if they were to be seen out on the street wearing them.

In the early days, it was very much a point of honour for outlaw clubs to remove colours from the backs of members of other chapters who might inadvertently stray into their territory. The rationale for this behaviour was almost certainly gleaned from sixties American biker movies and highly coloured magazine stories, which placed great emphasis on inter-club rivalry as a basis for their otherwise nonexistent 'plots'. A subsidiary, but nonetheless important factor, concerned the peculiarly parochial nature of clubs during the formative years, when members restricted their sphere of activity to within a few square miles of home, partly because of the unreliability of their machines which were cosmetically radical but often mechanically deficient, and partly because of a severe lack of petrol money. Thus, entrenchment and the defence of territory became primary considerations, assuming an importance which far outweighed other considerations.

Patches taken became much prized trophies of the club concerned and were mounted upside down on officers' - usually the presidents' - walls, in much the same way that a victorious army regiment might display its hard won battle honours. And, if an individual were to be unfortunate enough to lose his patch to a rival, then it could be relatively easily replaced through the dilligent needlework of his old lady. The aggrieved club might have decided to save face by making a token foray into the enemy camp, but more often than not the incident was shrugged off as a casualty of lifestyle.

However, as the surrounding subculture began to flourish and undergo a significant process of internal consolidation in the early 1970s, clubs were pressurised into getting their acts together if they wanted to appear in the vanguard of things. Short and long-term alliances were entered into with other, previously hostile, chapters, rules of conduct drawn up, and codes of behaviour progressively modified. Clubs were forced to travel further afield if they wished to attend organised runs or other biker gatherings, and thus achieve a standing in the eyes of their peers. This increased the risk of collective confrontation, whilst at the same time by default, eliminating the weaker, more parochial clubs from the contest. The once near universal practice of casual patch-taking dwindled and instead, several power blocs engaged themselves in a struggle for subcultural supremacy.

In Britain, it was the Hells Angels, with their greater numbers (Very many unrelated indiginous outlaw chapters had unilaterally elected to use the name Hells Angels and wear the deaths head emblem because of its pre-eminent subcultural significance.) and contacts overseas, were amongst the first to consolidate themselves on a regional, and later a national, basis. These home-grown Hells Angels soon split into two opposing camps: on the

one hand, there were those who paid tribute to the American-influenced and led international Hells Angels organisation - Hells Angels England; and, on the other, were those who, whilst acknowledging their subcultural ancestry saw no great advantage in compromising their independence - the Hells Angels Amalgamation. But, despite this fundamental difference of approach, neither side went out of their way to get to grips with each other, preferring to maintain a non-confrontational arm's length relationship.

When mass inter-club violence did flare up early in 1971, it arrived in the shape of the Road Rats, an independent London based chapter who boasted that they were 'better than the Angels' and were going to prove it. The Road Rats set out to establish an oppositional alliance under their own control and, when this failed, engineered a confrontation on Chelsea Bridge. The resulting brief but bloody running battle involving members of several unaligned outlaw clubs, left Peter 'Maggot' Howson of the Amalgamation Hells Angels' Essex chapter critically injured with a shotgun wound to the stomach. In the upheaval that followed in the wake of the Chelsea Bridge shooting, both factions of the Hells Angels, together with other major outlaw clubs throughout the country, further consolidated their territorial power bases and took steps to improve relations between each other. In 1976, the by now five chapter string Amalgamation sunk its differences with the two chartered England clubs and set about reincorporating other unaligned Hells Angels chapters, since which time the only confrontation of any note involving members of that particular club was the aforementioned clash in the New Forest, the result of the long-standing dispute with the errant Windsor chapter concerning the latter's entitlement to wear the deaths head patch.

In the case of the trouble at Cookham, Surrey, in 1983, there was, contrary to the wealth of 'informed opinion' bandied about at the time, no sinister hand of the Hells Angels at work engineering the bloody scenario which, though serious in its consequences for the parties concerned - the Road Rats and the Satans Slaves - was not at all pre-planned, but arose spontaneously out of a drunken quarrel. Likewise, the Pagans/Outcasts confrontation of 1986 which, although undeniably having its roots in an inter-club territorial dispute, was very far from being the surface manifestation of an organised conspiratorial campaign by the Hells Angels to broaden their power base. In fact, such headline-attracting incidents involving less subculturally sophisticated outlaw clubs are a considerable thorn in the side of the Hells Angels who, far from encouraging such disputes, are apt to pour scorn on the participants.

The fact that major clashes between one-percenter outlaw motorcycle clubs, although spectacular, are a very much rarer occurrence than conventional wisdom on the subject would have us believe, should not be taken as an indication that the typical outlaw biker is in any sense backwards in coming forwards when called upon to swing his fists in anger in response to a real or imagined attack upon the good name of his club. Indeed, individuals failing to fulfill their obligations in this direction to the fullest extent would very quickly be rendered liable to the imposition of collective sanctions leading ultimately to their expulsion from the club. There are no formal written rules prescribing penalties for failure to come to the aid of a fellow club member in a fight, but the 'all on one, one on all' maxim is adhered to unquestioningly throughout the subculture, even when the brother concerned has himself unwarrantedly provoked the trouble. Any arguments as to the rights and wrongs of the action will take place in private after the event, but, at the time, a

display of loyalty and solidarity in the face of outsiders is all important. Such seemingly 'over the top' forms of group reaction to a perceived slight often result in the banning from pubs and clubs of those concerned, but it nonetheless ensures that those who might otherwise chance their arm against a club member drinking alone at the bar, will usually be deterred through fear of retribution. In practice, despite their fearsome reputation, outlaw bikers seldom go out looking for trouble with members of the general public, preferring to concentrate their violent energies on those who actually present a concrete threat to the continued wellbeing of their club, frowning on those individuals who abuse their membership rights by provoking needless conflict.

Machismo abounds in the outlaw motorcycle subculture, but amongst the members of the top one-percenter clubs, it is predominantly a machismo conditioned by an ongoing sense of responsibility to the overriding interests of the parent club. Thus, although an outlaw will almost always react violently in defence of the symbolic affirmation of his particular group allegiance - the patch on his back - or to protect his brothers against attack, he is often equally prepared to shrug off the kinds of personal insult that would have other less-regulated members of society coming to blows. In defence of their club colours, they can and do commit acts of violence that shock the population, but left in peace they are unlikely to present any threat to the life and limb of those with whom they come into contact. Indeed, when observing one-percenter bikers in non-biking social situations it is apparent that many of them are at pains to reassure the surrounding company of their peaceful intentions, behaving with a degree of politeness that would do credit to many. Blue, one of the Angels interviewed in the course of my research, was extremely proud of his physical prowess and his ability to handle

himself in a fight, but was at the same time a quietly spoken and unassuming individual who was unlikely to lose his temper without a very good reason. He had a saying about his club's attitude to outsiders that he was particularly fond of quoting to those who balked at his appearance: "If you treat us with respect, you'll get nothing but respect back. Behave like arseholes and you'll get treated like arseholes. It's your choice .."

It may well be the case that in North America, Australasia and Continental Europe, the relative levels of crime and violence, both individual and collective, to be found within the confines of the outlaw motorcycle subculture differ to a greater or lesser extent with those levels identified in Great Britain. As a general rule, in common with other roughly comparable adult deviant subcultures, patterns of criminal activity are concomittant with those operating in the broader cultural milieu within which the participants live their lives. Thus, a one-percenter club hailing from a lower class area of downtown New York City, where certain forms of criminal activity are endemic to the structural conditions that characterise the neighbourhood, defining the sorts of behaviour appropriate to the inhabitants, are likely to go along with the general trend and be involved to a much greater extent in street crime, including drug peddling, prostitution and robbery. Indeed, crucial questions of machismo and survival in a dog eat dog environment dictate that any group of people who wish to assume a subcultural identity distinct and different from that of their peers are per se obliged to display characteristics of toughness and masculinity understandable to other, perhaps hostile groups with whom they are forced into routine contact. Violence may be deemed a necessity in circumstances where the standing of the club is threatened and in order to minimise the risk of conflict in the future and, in such instances, both the level and extent of that violence is determined by the perceived

seriousness of the threat and the strength of the opposing force. But, such disputes as do occur, are almost always circumscribed by considerations of continued club activity, individual pride taking very much of a back seat to collective interests.

In recent years, in response to repeated attacks on the outlaw motorcycle subculture by federal law enforcement agencies in the United States and elsewhere, such 'collective interests' have been redefined to include, where appropriate, matters of concern to the wider subculture. In spite of a prolonged dispute on the Eastern seaboard of North America between the Hells Angels and the Outlaws, a less well established club anxious to make a name for themselves, in the course of which there have been a number of deaths and serious casualties on both sides, the Angels were quite prepared to come to the assistance of their rivals, both financially and legally, when the latter were charged under the R.I.C.O. Act with being a criminal organisation. Thus, even in the heat of battle, questions of collective subcultural survival take absolute precedence over the particular interests of the warring factions. This has also been the case in West Germany where, as previously mentioned, the federal banning order imposed on the Hells Angels has had the effect of unifying hostile clubs and welding them into a proto-political force devoted to the active propagation of the biker lifestyle in the face of further government incursions.

Outlaw motorcycle clubs the world over are then highly-organised, tight-knit groups, whose members conduct their affairs behind closed doors and who, on occasions, indulge in criminal activities, on an individual or collective basis, aimed at furthering their particular subcultural interests. What they are not, however, are overtly criminal conspiracies whose overriding rationale pivots upon the collective acquisition of wealth and

power through the routine planning and execution of an illegal enterprise. If that were to be the case, then the democratic, but rather cumbersome, non-hierarchical, decision-making processes which typically characterise their internal organisational structures would have been forced, over time, to adapt accordingly. The Mafia comparison is entirely inappropriate as it presupposes a leader and led relationship between the participants, within which the sole purpose of the Indians, at the bottom of the ladder, is to increase the wealth and power of those few chiefs at the top of the ladder. In fact nothing could be further from the truth. Whilst some individual members might enjoy a good living from the proceeds of low-level criminal activities, the source or amount of that income bears not the slightest relation to those individuals positions in the club. Further, because the collective interests of the club, and ultimately the overarching subculture, always assume precedence over the interests of the individual member, criminal or otherwise, the scope for illicit advancement is so severely limited that it would not be viable for those wishing to ascend the ladder of criminality to remain members of an outlaw club. Besides which, the day to day form and level of commitment physically and psychologically required of the members of outlaw motorcycle clubs is highly uncondusive to the pursuit of criminal enterprises which could be held to conflict with either the organisational/security interests of the club or with the wider subcultural value structure.

In practice, few professional villains could be persuaded to treat on a regular basis with members of the outlaw biker fraternity, no matter how great the potential rewards. And the bikers, for their part, have a great disdain for 'ordinary criminals', whose admitted self-interest and consequent lack of subcultural solidarity is seen as a sign of untrustworthiness.

Deals can be arranged from time to time as and when mutually beneficial propositions are in the offing, but any concrete, longer lasting relationships are strongly discouraged. The outlaw biker's style of dress and very public persona too, as I have pointed out, precludes his involvement in criminal activities which require anonymity and their refusal to compromise on this point places an added restriction on what they can and can't get away with, a handicap which has led to the speedy apprehension of many a malefactor. For these reasons, it is plainly inconceivable to suggest that this is a subculture founded upon and organisationally geared to the primary pursuit of criminal endeavours. Such crime as does undeniably exist within the self-constructed boundaries of the subculture is both incidental and instrumental, almost entirely individualistic in content, and irretrievably constrained by its own internal behavioural strictures. Why is it then that outlaw bikers are considered to be so significant a threat to the public interest to warrant the implementation of 'extraordinary measures' more usually associated with professional criminal gangs or political dissidents?

Although outlaw motorcycle clubs cannot be characterised as organised criminal syndicates in the sense that the primary, or even ancillary, basis upon which they are formed and continue to operate is concerned with the collective advancement of criminal interests, irrespective of the criminal interests of the individual members, they are nevertheless highly organised, transcend state, national and international boundaries, and break the law with impunity if and when club policy so dictates. Inevitably, their activities, criminal or otherwise, draw the attention of campaigning politicians with a public order axe to grind, and law enforcement representatives anxious to demonstrate their ability to handle 'antisocial elements'. Legal attacks on outlaw

clubs can be easily rationalised because of the covert, conspiratorial manner in which the participants conduct their affairs, endowing otherwise mundane, everyday non-contentious behaviour with a healthy layer of mystique - mystique which translates as 'If they've got nothing to hide why don't they do it out in the open?'

Suspicion is further enhanced by the outlaws' declared refusal to cooperate with the police if apprehended. The 'conspiracy of silence' often referred to in the pages of official reports on the phenomenon is almost universally adhered to, the Hells Angels and similar one-percenter clubs having a written rule expressly forbidding members, on pain of expulsion, from making statements to the police or press. And, whilst this is more indicative of oppositional values in general, than criminality per se, it nonetheless exasperates prosecuting authorities and angers judges. The fact that the suspect of a crime, outlaw biker or upstanding citizen, has enshrined in law the right to remain silent when arrested by police, appears to have no bearing on the matter. According to the bikers themselves, they are merely choosing to exercise their right under the law, as indeed they consider everybody should in such circumstances, and that formal rules serve as a constant reminder to members of the catastrophic consequences of a police 'verbal' being illegally inserted into an otherwise perfectly innocent statement - an opinion which, having myself been verbed on no less than three separate occasions, I fully endorse.

By the same token, the prohibition of statements to the press, including television, radio and sociologists, a rule which arouses considerable speculation in the media as to its sinister implications, was only instituted as a result of a long-standing crusade by the tabloids against 'Hells Angels', with the recog-

dition by those routinely villified that whatever they said would be either ignored by journalists or distorted to 'fit the facts'. That being so, they were inclined to make the best of a bad situation by keeping their mouths firmly shut and letting the press get on with it, a policy which has probably done them no great disservice.

In common with full-time members of the professional criminal fraternity, outlaw bikers have an extreme abhorrence of 'grassing', and would far rather suffer the penalty incurred for something they haven't done than 'put the finger' on a brother. So deeply ingrained is this principle within the subculture that it is not at all an unusual occurrence for members to take the rap for a fellow club member who might, if convicted, receive a lengthy prison term in view of the seriousness of his criminal record. Indeed, this practice extends beyond the bounds of membership of a particular club to include members of hostile clubs with whom they may become embroiled. If, in the course of an inter-club altercation, a one-percenter member is attacked and injured, he is unlikely to reveal the identity of his attackers to police, preferring to take care of things in his own time, or even forget it altogether, rather than suffer a loss of honour in the eyes of his peers.

The 'no grassing rule', albeit in an unwritten but no less clearly understood form, extends to what Taylor terms, that "well established practice among professional criminals and certain policemen",³⁰⁸ the practice of 'doing a deal' in return for a dismissal or reduction in the severity of charges. No self-respecting outlaw would, if he were offered, provide information, money or the proceeds of crime to arresting officers by way of a bribe, and suggestions to that effect, even from family or friends, would be greeted with derision. Neither are they pre-

pared to 'put their hands up' - confess - to a lesser offence in order to secure a more favourable result in court. They will often plead not guilty to charges resulting from offences for which they've been caught red handed, eschewing the very idea of 'helping the police with their enquiries' in any way, shape or form. In court, outlaw motorcycle club members will always have the best available in solicitors and barristers, but will usually decline to testify from the witness box on their own behalf. This blanket refusal to play ball with the criminal justice system usually results in the conviction of the individual concerned and the imposition of harsher than average sentences from a judge who feels that his own authority, and that of the court, has been undermined. Thus, a very high percentage of outlaw bikers occupy an inordinate amount of space on the computer tapes of the Criminal Records Office by virtue, not of their innate criminality, but their extreme oppositional stance to authority.

Those that end up behind bars as a result, disdain from mixing with other convicted prisoners wherever possible, electing to spend their time in the company of other one-percenter club members or non-aligned outlaw bikers. In the United States, there are several long-established organisations catering specifically for bikers in prison, and all leading subcultural magazines carry a regular column focusing on prison issues as well as providing a medium through which incarcerated bikers can contact pen-pals on the outside. Great store is put on the fact that these commitments to brothers, and indeed sisters, in prison are maintained, and club members, whatever the lengths of their sentences, receive regular visits, money, family support and any other benefits they might require, until such time as they return to the outside world. In Britain, the recently formed Prison Motorcycle Brotherhood functions to unify imprisoned

bikers and protect their collective interests. In the words of their manifesto, which is copied and distributed to prisons throughout Great Britain: "The Prison Motorcycle Brotherhood - U.K. strives to keep downed bikers in touch with the outside world. Why should a biker lose his sense of identity, his interest in bikes and the comradeship of his brothers just because he's banged up in an alien environment?

"To become a member of the P.M.B. you must first qualify in one of the following categories - you must be a biker, you must not be a time-waster ...; you must agree 100% with the ideals and principles of the P.M.B. When released, or when on the outside, you must be prepared to wear the club emblem - two clenched fists manacled together with the words Prison Motorcycle Brotherhood - United Kingdom in a circle - as either an arm patch or a front patch to identify yourself with the Brotherhood. You must be totally straight and honest with your fellow club brothers, and agree to be totally silent to all outsiders about club matters.

"The P.M.B. is a non-aligned and totally independent club. It is a club within clubs, a sense of unity between bikers tolerating the same environment, be they patch wearers or otherwise. It is a point of contact between downed bikers who are all too often forgotten because they're out of circulation. It's an opening to the outside world when you're confined to four walls, and above all, it's a Brotherhood.

"Any outside clubs are more than welcome to become affiliated members of the P.M.B. providing that they agree with club principles and are prepared to write a few words to a downed brother or visit him in prison ...

"... (Don't) say it won't work because it is working right

at this moment. It's working to benefit yourselves and your brothers ...

"The only 'no nos' are no nonces (rapists and other sex offenders) and no heavy dope users (smack or other mainliners). Everybody else is welcome.

"The Prison Motorcycle Brotherhood is contactable c/o:
Vice Pres: H.M.Prison, Wormwood Scrubs,
Ducane Road, London ..." 309

It is quite clear that outlaw bikers, irrespective of either the seriousness or the extent of their criminal activities, of their own volition place themselves outside the limits of general social acceptability. However rational and well-considered the values generated by the subculture may be for those concerned, they are not values which, in public at least, are shared by the guardians of bourgeois society. I suppose it would be fair to say that if the bikers self-proclaimed 'outlawdom' brings them into head-on confrontation with the forces of law and order, then they only have themselves to blame, but it should nevertheless be borne in mind by those who would dismiss the well-orchestrated campaign to outlaw the outlaws that what they are witnessing is only the tip of a very big iceberg which could, if left unchallenged, sink a great many others in its wake. The massive amounts of time, energy and dollars being spent annually in the United States and elsewhere in a wholly spurious attempt to tar the subculture with the brush of organised crime, while bona fide organised crime has a political blind eye turned towards it, would be farcical if its implications for all our futures were not so serious. When, in the name of the public interest, ex-C.I.A. agents like Scott Barnes can take the stand and tell a jury that he operated in a 'no limits', covert organisation that was "trying

to convince the American public that Hells Angels are organised crime, a syndicate family",³¹⁰ in order to "build up credibility with the United States Attorney's Office",³¹¹ an allegation that was incidently never denied, then somebody, somewhere should start worrying. When killing, bombing, gun running, drug-trafficking, illegal wire-tapping, the burning of hookers and drug addicts, the deliberate fomentation of gang warfare, the manipulation of the media and the use of catch-all legislation like the R.I.C.O. Act, that defines a 'criminal enterprise' as a body which has "received its income from a 'pattern of racketeering activity'",³¹² the sole proof of that 'pattern' being that within a period of ten years an undefined number of members or associates of the 'enterprise' have, or may have, committed an undisclosed number of offences, then virtually every formal organisation in the Western world should look to its laurels. When a European government minister feels able to impose a nationwide banning order on members of a motorcycle club before they have been convicted of any crimes, and then refuses to recind the ban despite the ruling of a court that his action was both unwarranted and unconstitutional, then whose who care about civil liberties should start asking questions. When official paranoia "to the highest echelons of the Federal Government"³¹³ escapes on to the streets and begins to run riot, then our entire criminal justice system is discredited. And, when 'authoritative' statements like the one below are syndicated worldwide and taken seriously by the recipients, then the lunatics truly have taken over the assylum.

"PHILADELPHIA (UPI) - The head of a task force on motorcycle gangs said Thursday the outlaw bikers have joined the ranks of international terrorists organizations.

"Chief Thomas Gallagher, head of a southeastern Pennsylvania

task force on outlaw motorcycle gangs, made his comments at a meeting of the Philadelphia Crime Commission.

"Drawing on 20 years experience of studying outlaw bikers in several U.S. states, Canada where they are expanding rapidly, England, Holland, Germany, Denmark and Australia.

"'Motorcycle gangs are true terrorists, no different from European terrorist organizations," he said. "They are financed and work for organized crime. *

"'They are a multi-million dollar organization which performs professional contract hits and deals in narcotics, gambling, union and anti-union enforcement - anyone who will pay them'he said.

"William Davis, a state trooper connected to the task force, said the current outlaw club membership numbers 500,000. "I don't know if that scares you, but it scares me," he said.

"'The old image of the outlaw biker in 'colors', with long hair and a chopped motorcycle is changing', said Gallagher.

"'They are going underground,' said Gallagher. 'They've cut their hair, they're not riging motorcycles. They are more sophisticated. They carry their bikes in vans. They are much quieter than before.'

"... He said the task force has in the past few years travelled to California, Connecticut, Texas and Ontario to work with law enforcement groups embroiled in wars on outlaw bike clubs.

"Gallagher said the modern outlaw motorcycle club has also begun to get financial backing from "right-wing multi-millionaires who think they are backing neo-Nazi, Ku Klux Klan and other right wing extremist groups."

"Along with an impressive arsenal of explosives and weapons, the modern biker club sometimes boasts a helicopter, a DC-8 airplane and stock in two magazines connected to the clubs, Super-cycle and Easy Rider (sic), Gallagher said ..." 314

Q.E.D.

CONCLUSION - 'HE'S REALLY GOT INTO THE ROLE. HASN'T HE?'

"Then the conversation turned to the outlaw gangs: were they as bad as they are made out to be?

"'Lee Gutkind thinks the news and the movies made the Hell's Angels,' Nat said. 'Brando was pretty convincing.'

"The older man watched Cy, who said nothing. 'What do you think?' he finally asked. 'Anybody in leathers on a Harley 74, California plates, must know something.'

"Cy sipped his coffee and didn't offer a reply.

"'What about the races at Loudon?' the younger guy asked. 'Is that a bad scene? Are you going up there?'

"'We aren't,' the mother laughed. From his seat in the booth their little boy watched all the faces.

"'Sometimes there's big trouble up there,' the older man said.

"'Nothing's gone wrong the times we've been there.' His wife brushed at the powdered sugar.

"'It's a great race - the Nationals,' the older man said. 'It's a damn shame when it goes bad.'

"'Why do they get so uptight about a motorcycle race?' the young guy asked. 'Riots happen - lots worse ones - at soccer games, rock concerts, you know. People have it in for bikers.'

"'If bikers were really straight, it wouldn't be half the fun,' the girl said. She had stopped shaking, and he boyfriend said, 'You feel free on a bike, and freedom is never really respectable.'

"'What do you mean by that?' Nat asked. 'Freedom's what America's all about, isn't it? You know, 'sweet land of liberty, let freedom ring'.'

"Cyrus and the young couple laughed with derision. The little boy's parents laughed too, but sadly, and the older couple looked unhappy.

"'There isn't any such thing as freedom.' The father glanced at his little boy as he spoke. 'I don't mean that cynically. Freedom works out to mean freer than something else. Beyond the old limits.'

"'Rules, discipline, that's what makes you free,' the old man said. The other man looked about to argue the point, but the older man turned to Nat. 'Every morning you're on the road, you make your quick visual check, right?' His glance was so stern and sharp that Nat murmured, 'Yes, sir.'

"'That bike's a freedom machine as long as you look after it, take care of it, show it some respect. Then you're free to zoom over the landscape, part man, part bird, part machine.'

"Cyrus stopped laughing and nodded. 'Nobody's got rules like the outlaw gangs. The Angels are a real tight society.'

"Everybody studied Cy again as if he had secret knowledge, and the girl said, 'But nobody thinks of that when they see us go by, you know. The people with cars and houses - they think we aren't obeying any rules at all.'

"'That's what I meant by freedom not being respectable,' her boyfriend said, and everybody agreed ..."³¹⁵

'INTO THE ROAD'. ADRIENNE RICHARD

THE WORLD WILL BE ON THE BRINK OF DESTRUCTION
AND A BAND OF REBELS WILL RISE TO RULE THE WORLD...

THESE REBELS WILL BE THE ANGELS FROM HELL
FOR THE EARTH IS HELL AND UPON IT ARE THE ANGELS ...³¹⁶

Chuck, Hells Angels Motorcycle Club,
New York City.

At the outset of my research I went along to a sixth form deviancy conference at the University of York where I listened to

the experts addressing the audience on the subject of 'doing research into deviant subcultures', from which I learnt absolutely sod all except that in order to qualify as a serious deviancy researcher you need to wear a pair of red shoes and isolate yourself from your subject matter. Later the same evening, as I stepped up to the bar to buy a round of drinks, still dressed in my 'biker gear', I was amazed to hear a comment passed from one of the sociological conferees to another. That comment - "He's really got into the role, hasn't he?" - just about summed up for me the bankruptcy of academic sociology as it is applied to the concerns of the lower orders. A criticism which will most likely lose me any chance I had of gaining a Ph.D, but nevertheless one which I stand by without reservation. When it comes to being a sociologist, I for one am firmly on the side of the Angels ...

Three weeks prior to the completion of the thesis I received an unexpected telephone call from no less a personage than the chief features writer of the Daily Mail. Could I, he inquired, assist him with a piece he was putting together for his newspaper provisionally entitled 'Hells Angels - The Truth Behind The Terror', a double page 'definitive' history of outlaw bikers and their activities on the streets of Britain today? He had, he explained, already interviewed an 'ex-Angel'-turned-Christian missionary, from whose lips he had elicited 'most of the facts', but needed some 'more up to date information' on one or two items like 'initiation rituals', before putting the final touches to his 'masterpiece'. I, he felt, would be pleased to provide him with that information, thereby ensuring a 'balanced view' and, presumably, adding in the process, a stamp of academic authenticity to his otherwise ill-informed scribblings. I told him that I was buggered if I was going to attempt to condense fifteen years of practical involvement and four years of postgraduate study on the

subject of outlaw bikers into a ten minute phone call simply to reinforce conclusions that he'd no doubt already reached a long time ago, and slammed down the receiver. The feature has not appeared in print.

I have, I must add, only marginally greater respect for the intellectual jottings of subcultural theorists on the biker phenomenon, where they exist, than I have for the press. In my considered opinion, when it comes to the empirical study of quasi-criminal, predominantly working class subcultures, let alone constructing theories about them, ninety-nine per cent of the 'experts' in the fields of sociology, criminology and psychology whose works I have consulted during the compilation of this thesis don't know their conceptual arses from their elbows. And, of those who have actually gone out into the field and got their hands dirty, rather than submerge their obvious lack of first-hand knowledge in an ocean of meaningless theoretical obfuscation, there are but a tiny handful who have neglected to take along with them a sackful of middle class prejudices - prejudices which have successfully rendered their conclusions unworthy of the good quality paper that they're printed on.

Have I done any better? I honestly couldn't say. I have at least attempted to provide the reader with an objective, unbiased account of the historical and ideological underpinnings of a subculture which in the course of its existence has had more myths heaped upon it than practically any other post-war subculture in the world, and yet about which little has been made public outside the somewhat less than reliable pages of the tabloid newspapers. Even the most widely read, and almost as widely quoted, book on the subject, Hunter S. Thompson's Hells Angels, has been in print for over twenty years, during which time 'The Menace' of Oakland, California, upon which the author focused his undoubtedly

talented attentions, has proliferated on an international scale undreamed of in the early 1960s. Thompson's Hells Angels may well have been, as he points out, "a logical product of the (sixties) culture"³¹⁷ within which they thrived, but they didn't simply arrive out of nowhere on to the streets of San Francisco.

Certainly the Angels, together with a whole host of other less prominent outlaw motorcycle clubs and non-aligned bikers, embraced the hippie way of life with scarcely concealed enthusiasm, outwardly merging their own clearly delineated subcultural form into the overarching stratum but, unlike their middle class mentors of the 'love generation', the bikers had both a history and a presence wholly independent of that particular conjunctural moment, surviving the demise of hippiedom and continuing to be prominent into the 1970s, the 1980s, and the foreseeable future.

It is to provide an explanation for the permanency and the pervasiveness of the outlaw motorcycle subculture, its evolution out of the various, at first glance disparate national/historical contextual strands, into its present day form as a cohesive international, inter-generational, inter-racial and largely inter-class phenomenon, which has been my focal concern, and in so doing strip away the myth from the reality, exposing the no less rich layers of subcultural life hidden beneath.

Hebdige (G.B. 1979) correctly stresses the prime importance for the prospective researcher to distinguish,

"Between the delinquent gang (small, with a specific local recruitment, a local set of loyalties, and a strong commitment to 'machismo', subterranean values and illegal activities) and the subculture which is altogether broader, looser, less strictly defined by class and regional membership and less literally invol-

ved in law-breaking. (But) there are obvious connections ... (And), moreover, the two terms are virtually synonymous in the popular mythology. Unfortunately, the confusion that follows from this association (about class, violence, etc.) has all too often been reproduced in academic work because ... the analysis of subcultures grew in large part directly out of the study of delinquent street gangs."³¹⁸

If, in the course of this thesis, I have simply added to the sum total of confusion, I make no apologies to the acknowledged intellectual giants of subcultural theory, but maintain today, as I did at the outset, that the outlaw motorcycle subculture by its very nature defies conceptualisation either in terms of a plethora of localised, unconnected delinquent gangs, or as a broader, more transient subcultural movement, founded upon the shifting sands of fashion, music or socio-political ideology.

Given its permanency and concreteness, not to mention its immense media appeal, it is strange indeed that specialists in the subcultural field have had little or nothing of any importance to say on the subject of the outlaw motorcycle subculture. The aforementioned Hebdige, although highly voluble on a multitude of subcultures, refrains from passing comment on bikers except in their role as the 'traditional enemies' of the mods, who, incidentally, occupy many pages of his work. He does however agree with Nuttall (1969), that "(very) little has come out of the whole teenage development that has more beauty than decorated rocker jackets. They show", he says, "the creative impulse at its purest and most inventive. Without any sentimentality, it is possible to say that they constitute art of a high degree, symmetrical, ritualistic, with a bizarre metallic brilliance and a high fetishistic power."³¹⁹

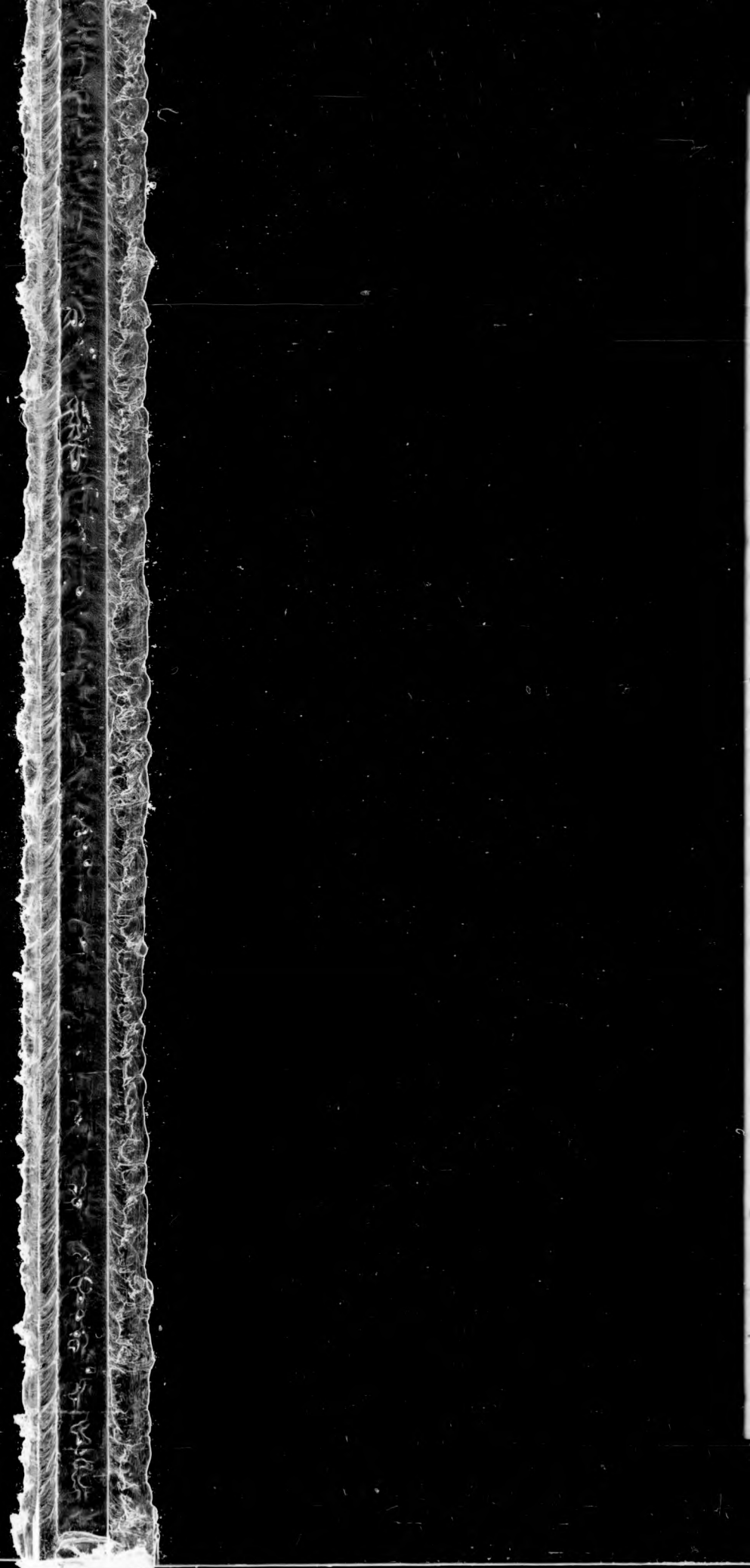
Nuttall (1968) himself confines his comments, such as they are, to a wordy analysis of the derivation of the rockers' style of dress. He posits that this particular subcultural ensemble suddenly arrived on the scene by way of a "fantastic orgy of identificatory reaction",³²⁰ taking its cue from a handful of American "brute-heroes, ... hipster-heroes, (and) ... pain-heroes".³²¹ by which he means Johnny Ray, Marlon Brando, James Dean and Elvis Presley, who were, he states, "the product and, in turn, the catalysts of a particular section of the teenage group - the motorcycle cowboys ... (whose) uniform consisted of skin-tight jeans and black leather jacket. Accessories could include peaked cap (further shades of the SS), calf-length boots, neck bandanas, Nazi war relics, big brash colour transfers and later, in England, where the 'ton-up boys' became 'the rockers' (indicating a defensive adherence to the simple early forms of rock'n'roll) ornate patterns of brass studs, tiger-tails, fringes, chains and bells (bells?)".³²²

The "Rockers", writes Nuttall, "were so clearly 'going through a phase.'" ³²³ , a phase apparently manufactured and circumscribed by the moguls of the popular music industry. Even in the case of Brando, whose influence upon the stylistic development of the motorcycle subculture goes without question, it was not Marlon the actor who single-handedly generated the 'fantastic orgy of identificatory reaction' that recruited countless numbers of teenage bike riders to the subculture, but his, and Kramer's very accurate celluloid portrayal of Johnnie, the real 'Wild One' who already existed in flesh and blood in California awaiting media recognition, a fact which seems to have escaped Nuttall's notice.

Nuttall further suggests that the contemporary American outlaw motorcycle subculture owes its direct parentage to the 'phased out' British pop-rocker phenomenon. Again, music rather than

historical fact is introduced to make intelligible its 'emergence' twenty years after it had first swung a leg across a bike and been declared persona non grata by the American motorcycling establishment. As if Hollister had never existed, Nuttall draws upon a convoluted mixture of Elvis Presley and the seaside battles of the mods and rockers to explain the otherwise inexplicable. "Since Elvis first presented himself as shaman of psychopathic sex, violence and anti-domestic narcissism, the whole culture", he says, "has been increasingly tribal in its customs and hierarchies. It was inevitable that ultimately it would form at least one really vast and organised local tribe. In California the tribe clarified itself in the official ranks, chapters, membership rituals and savagery of Hell's Angels."³²⁴

Hall, Jefferson et al (1975), whose *Resistance through Rituals* is probably the definitive handbook of post-war subcultures, significantly fail to include a chapter on bikers, summing up four decades of British motorcycle-borne subcultural activity in but a single paragraph: "(Though) in a formal sense early Rock 'n' Roll and 'West Coast Rock' have the potential to carry and express different meanings, there is a clear homology or fit between the intense activism, physicality, externalisation of attitudes in behaviour, taboo or introspection, and love of speed and machines of ... (the) 'Motor-bike Boys' and the early Rock 'n' Roll music to which they were exclusively attached; just as there is a homology between the 'structurelessness', introspection and loose group affiliation of ... (the) 'Hippie' group and their preferred music. It is the objective potential of the cultural form ... and its fit with the subjective orientation of the group which facilitates the appropriation of the former by the latter, leading (sometimes) to a sort of stylistic fusion between object and group. However, the eventually produced style is more than



the simple amalgam of all the separate elements - it derives its specific symbolic quality from the arrangement of all the elements together in one whole ensemble, embodying and expressing the group's selfconsciousness."³²⁵ Not many people know that. Fewer still, me included, understand it.

Brake (1980) actually accords a whole page of his book, *The Sociology of Youth Culture and Youth Subcultures*, to the study of 'Rockers', a description which, despite having long since disappeared from every day subcultural parlance, nonetheless continues to dominate the writings of sociologists. "Rockers", maintains Brake, "can be seen as two groups, firstly the bikers, the 'Wild Ones' of Brando, the 'Hell's angels' (sic), hanging around transport caffs, in black leather and studs, performing ton-ups on the ... motorways. They project an 'easy rider' nomadic romanticism, violent, loyal only to each other, anti-authority and anti-domesticity, the male free wanderer dream, living only for the present. The non-riders, 'greasers' had a similar image, but were less involved in the cult of the bike, sharing only the studied scruffiness and aggressively working class masculinity, bad boys against the mods' clean boy image ... The bike is not transport, but an object of intimidation and mastery, which projects the rider uneasily near to death. Dancing has also been transformed by them into a more individual style, away from the control of dance hall management to a more individual form ... The music of the golden age of Elvis, Gene Vincent, Eddie Cochran was physical and unchanging, making no demands on intellect or knowledge of melodic craft. It was related in a chain of events, music - dancing - motor bikes, with the addition of violence and sexuality ... Rock is body music, simple and yet highly aggressive; death is ever present on the bike, and this threat is central to control, control over the machine, one's life, one's body, one's identity - one's

Brake's attempt to explain the genesis of the British rocker certainly contains within it elements of factuality. It is however fundamentally flawed by a liberal sprinkling of terminological inexactitudes. Furthermore, his typology of the 'chain of events' which mark subcultural progression from music, through dancing, to motor bikes, 'with the addition of violence and sexuality', is every bit as patronising as it is naive, and the implicit contention that the working class is unable to attain the dizzy heights of intellect necessary to grasp the nuances of the melodic craft amply betrays his own eugenic upbringing. In the interests of academic nicety I will refrain from further comment.

Mungham and Pearson (1976) make no mention whatsoever of the motorcycle subculture in their glossary of working class youth cultures, except in the introduction, wherein they condescend to include rockers as an adjunct to their expressly preferred sixties subculture, the mods, to whom they devote an inordinate amount of space. I quote:

"The mod thing first became noticeable as a distinct style in 1963, but it only really burst to life after the riots at holiday towns in 1964 between mods and rockers ... Rockers preferred leather jackets to smart gear, and noisy motor bikes to GS scooters. At least in their appearance rockers were hard, tough, male and hot; mods were soft, peacockish, almost feminine and cool as ice. But appearances could be deceptive. Although mods were despised by rockers because some of them wore make-up on the face (I find it difficult to imagine where else they might have worn it) and, therefore, were nothing more than 'fairies' or 'bum-boys', the events of Easter 1964 showed the rockers that the mods were still

young working men who were quite prepared to fight their way out of, and into, trouble."³²⁷

In *Popular Culture: Past and Present* (1982), Waites, Bennett and Martin et al actually devote a chapter to 'The Motor-Bike And Motor-Bike Culture', but as this is nothing more than a synopsis of Willis's earlier treatise on the subject, I shall reserve comment for the author's original work. The same is true of Barker's (1982) round-up of subcultural essays, in which Willis's work makes yet another appearance, this time in a much abbreviated form under the title 'The Triple-X boys'.

Martin (1981), whose *Sociology of Contemporary Cultural Change* examines the "unmistakably tribal ... cultural artefacts of working class youth (which takes) ... the classic form of the body symbolism of the group pattern",³²⁸ again cites the case of 'Willis's motor-bike boys', and at least partially gets it right by acknowledging that "(For) them identity is mediated through a clearly defined cluture with a territorial focus."³²⁹ She goes on to list the 'qualities' which, in her opinion, are essential prerequisites for group participation:

"Only aggressive masculinity, the ability to 'take it', to 'handle yourself' on and off the bike, to hold your own in a fight, to accept the (very high) risk of killing yourself on the bike, give you the right to belong to the group. Motor-bike culture is", she says, "a particularly good example of the potent liminal communitas of shared physical danger, the death-ecstasy syndrome ... The other important point about this culture which all the other lower-working class sub-cultures share is its certainty and unself-consciousness."³³⁰

Martin's account, as far as it goes, has promise. She does

at least recognise that the motorcycle subculture, albeit that small portion of the whole personified by Willis's rockers, is a 'clearly defined culture' in its own right, and not merely a 'passing phase', without whose providential opposition the catalyst necessary to ensure the successful emergence of the mods might well have been lacking. Her assessment of the physical and mental qualities required of members of sub-groups at the more formalised hardcore, one-percenter, end of the subcultural spectrum, are not at all inaccurate, although such 'aggressive masculinity' cannot be said to characterise the subculture as a whole. Likewise, the acceptance of the risks run in riding a motorcycle on the public highway, at speed or otherwise, do not automatically qualify the individuals involved as candidates for the 'death-ecstasy syndrome'. Riding styles may be reckless on occasions, but real terminal death, except in the context of public bar conversation and petrol tank murals, is almost always studiously avoided. As for the 'potent liminal communitas of shared physical danger', by which I take her to mean a conscious and highly-charged camaraderie - a brotherhood - which thrives on the threat of external dangers, real or imagined, she certainly has a point, but a point which again cannot be said to apply as an across the board generalisation.

'Certainty and unself-consciousness' are there in abundance within the ranks of the bikers - certainty of their subcultural roots, of their solidity and of their future, a future which hinges upon their continued commitment to subcultural membership - perhaps moreso now than when Willis did his research in the 1960s. Indeed, in the course of my own research many of the respondents were most anxious to emphasise their unshakeable belief in the permanency of the subcultural form. One of the Hells Angels I interviewed expressed that felling of certainty

thus:

"If I was to go to prison, and ... I had a girlfriend. If I came out (and) she wasn't there ..., I know the club's always gonna be there. That'll be there for ever ...

"It's my family. It's my way of life. It's my lifestyle. If anything else isn't there, this is always there."

Indeed, it would be extremely difficult to imagine a less unself-conscious group than an outlaw motorcycle club, bedecked with garish patches on their backs, publicly and provocatively proclaiming their deviancy to one and all.

Unfortunately, Martin concludes her piece on bikers by condemning them all as 'anti-immigrant, anti-gay, anti-women' and anti-just-about-anything-else, explaining this extreme form of 'ethnocentricity' by reference to the "consciousness of material or even status deprivation that fuels the gang's (my emphasis) hostility"³³¹ - apparently an inherent problem amongst the 'lower-working class', whose rejection of bourgeois values never quite measures up to the high expectations of middle class academics. So much for ethnocentricity.

The very latest subcultural tomes, Chambers (1985) *Urban Rythms: Popular Music and Popular Culture*, and the same author's (1986) *Popular Culture: The Metropolitan Experience*, omit reference to bikers in any way, shape or form, apart from bemoaning the fact that the Hells Angels, apparently single-handedly, destroyed, "the romantic belief that the music might 'break on through to the other side' ... (by terrorising) the Altamount crowd and (murdering) the 18-year-old black youth Meredith Hunter",³³² before making way for their co-conspirator in the planned annihilation of the 'love generation', Charles Manson.

So much for these subcultural specialists, who apparently consider the subject of the outlaw motorcycle subculture unworthy of any serious attention. Now let us turn to that tiny minority who have at least attempted to get beneath the surface of the phenomenon.

In the introduction to the first of his two papers on the outlaw motorcycle subculture, Canadian criminologist and official advisor to the Royal Canadian Mounted Police Criminal Intelligence Branch, Randal Montgomery, makes the following justification:

"Since", he writes, "some academic readers may be unfamiliar with this deviant subculture, some introduction and detailed definition is necessary.

"If some of the terminology and content which follow seem sensationalistic or spectacular, it is because these are cultivated attributes of the subculture being discussed. To take the attitude that the subject is beneath the dignity of serious social scientists is to continue to abdicate the analysis of popular trends to journalists and Hollywood. Until now, no analysis has been provided by Sociologists, Criminologists or Social Psychologists. Certainly this colourful and bizarre subculture warrants professional analysis. Not only is it an interesting deviant social phenomenon with thousands of adherents, but it has involved the efforts of many journalists, lawyers, social workers, and law enforcement officers. Indeed the 'Outlaw Biker Subculture' was only a few years ago portrayed as a major threat to law and order. More recently Outlaw Bikers have been pinpointed as the main single reason for the failure of the counterculture, especially in regard to the demise of rock festivals, and the peace/love/brotherhood philosophy. Today they are accused of being major distribution organisations for hard drugs ..."

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Penning in 1976 from 'field research' conducted in Toronto in the mid-sixties, Montgomery's papers, crude and anachronistic as they undoubtedly are, nevertheless represent the apex of academic understanding of the subject and, as such, merit consideration, consideration with their content and their conclusions scarcely justify. The first paper concerns itself with a theoretical explanation of the evolution of the subculture in North America and the meanings that it holds in terms of status - 'manhood striving' - and material benefit for the participants, dwelling in particular on the role of the outlaw motorcycle club as a vehicle for adolescent rites de passage or, as he puts it, lower class youth 'striving for adulthood'.

The 'rites of adolescence' specifically associated with the outlaw motorcycle subculture are listed by Montgomery as follows:

- decoration (tattoos, mutilation, distinctive costumes)
- acquisition of new name and language
- seclusion from women ...
- break from home and assimilation by the new group
- sexual ambivalence and homosexuality
- hazing and ordeal to prove fitness to become members
- element of economic profit for older men
- education for new roles and incorporation into men's groups
- sex fertility theme ...
- death and rebirth myth.

He then attempts to back up this nine point list by reference to empirical evidence found in the biker subculture. Unfortunately, his examples, short and simplistic as they are, significantly fail to measure up to his theory, and one is forced to conclude that his information about what actually takes place during such 'rites of adolescence' has been gleaned from distinctly secondhand sources. His knowledge of things mechanical is I fear

equally unsound. I quote:

"Outlaws invariably ride the biggest bikes on the market, and then extend the frames and front forks to make the overall dimensions even greater. The long front forks ... are obviously phallic extensions resembling a chromed steel erection. The sole purpose of such modifications are 'to look good' (though to non-Outlaws they are ugly) and 'to show class' (i.e. to create certain effects on onlookers and to distinguish a chopper from a standard bike) ..."

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Paper two, imaginatively entitled The Outlaw Motorcycle Subculture: II, is concerned with the apparent theoretical ambiguities which raise their heads in the explanatory model adopted by Montgomery in paper one. He strives to explain the presence within the outlaw motorcycle subculture of what Cohen (1955) describes as "middle class values which were not held by the lower class".³³⁵ "There are", he says, "a few of the middle class virtues (my emphasis) which are in some form accepted and acted upon by the bikers. These include 'cultivation of personality' (though admittedly not 'manners and courtesy' a la Amy Vanderbilt) and 'high value on skills' (though not 'tangible achievement' unless sheer survival in the subculture can be considered as achievement, as Thompson (1966) thinks it is)."

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He notes that:

"While a middle class person may cultivate his or her personality by standing in front of a mirror (checking on demeanour and dress) and by consulting dictionaries (to improve vocabulary), there are lower class and Outlaw equivalents.

"... (Intrinsic personalities (are) 'developed' so as to receive rewards from peers. An aggressive person becomes more violent, an erratic person becomes totally unpredictable, a drug

user becomes an indiscriminate addict, a verbal ponderer becomes the equivalent of a 'resident philosopher', a girl chaser becomes a 'sex pervert', etc ..."³³⁷

Montgomery goes on to explore the social skills 'peculiar to the outlaw motorcycle subculture'. He marks down such notable 'attributes' as the 'crude joke', the 'instant insult', the 'fast boot', or the 'good rider', as being characteristic "highly esteemed amongst One Percenters",³³⁸ and posits accordingly that: "The Outlaw biker has no use for such middle class skills as a 'mind for figures', 'a good editor', 'an astute critic', 'a meticulous programmer', 'a good father', 'a fast typist', etc..."³³⁹

I have to congratulate Montgomery for deigning to turn his attention to a subject which I wholeheartedly agree has long been held to be 'beneath the dignity of serious social scientists', but having read his two papers I really wonder why he bothered. As the author himself freely admits in the introduction, the bulk of his "ethnographic data on the subculture at large was obtained from movie and television documentaries, magazine interviews, Thompson's book Hell's Angels, and the autobiography of a Hell's Angel Freewheelin' Frank,"³⁴⁰ as well as assorted newspaper clippings; hardly in my view an adequate basis upon which to substantiate the grandiose theoretical conclusions at which he arrives, or at least appears to arrive. I say 'appears' because it quickly becomes apparent to the reader that Montgomery's conclusions were arrived at well in advance of any serious attempt at data collection, and such ethnographic data as was subsequently obtained by watching movies and dipping into no less than two books, was neatly slotted in at a later date to tidy up the loose ends. And, if as he maintains, he has indeed also "relied ... on his general experience with Outlaw motorcyclists from big-name clubs"³⁴¹, then all I can say is that the 'general experience'

to which he refers is so damn generalised as to be rendered absolutely meaningless.

No, I'm afraid that Montgomery, for all his insistence on the outlaw motorcycle subculture being a subject eminently worthy of study, singularly fails to provide the reader with any greater insight than might be obtained from perusing any run of the mill biker movie or pulp paperback. The simplistic contention that such 'intrinsic personalities' who, like a troop of performing chimpanzees, receive grapes from their peers in return for amplifying their innate deviant tendencies in an approved direction does I admit conjure up a very amusing picture, but to imagine that any group of people, delinquent, lower class or otherwise, outside the confines of a mental institution, could progressively act out such one-dimensional roles as 'indiscriminate drug addict', 'resident philosopher' or 'sex pervert', is an absurdity only equalled by Montgomery's quaintly ethnocentric assumption that the lower classes are incapable of either possessing or appreciating in others such middle class virtues as a 'mind for figures', 'an astute critic' or, most ludicrous of all, 'a good father'.

So much for Montgomery, what of that other select band of sociologists who have made the outlaw motorcycle subculture a specific object of study? Of those very few studies that do exist, significantly none have emanated from the United States, host nation of the world's most populous community of outlaw bikers, unless that is we include Thompson's Hell's Angels, a journalistic account, but nonetheless one which so stunningly outshines all its academic rivals in terms of accuracy and insight that it still holds its own as essential reading two decades after publication. In England, however, sociological interest in the phenomenon has been, if not great, at least greater than in North America.

Stanley Cohen's (1972) study of the creation of the indigenous mod and rocker subcultures, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*, is a classic appraisal of the impact that the seaside battles of the mid-sixties had on both members of the warring factions themselves and the wider society, and is a must for the reading list of anybody who is seriously concerned to discover the subcultural reality underlying the public image. As such, it dramatically surpasses its only other contender for honours, Paul Willis's (1978) study of 'motor-bike boys', *Profane Culture*. Willis's simplistic and ill-informed account of the focal concerns of a group of Birmingham-based rockers in the late 1960s first saw the light of day in essay form entitled *The Motor-Bike Within A Sub-cultural Group* (1972), in the course of which the author sets out to provide an explanation of "the role of pop music in the motor-bike subculture",³⁴² but somehow discovers along the way that "the motorbike as an object was of such paramount 'symbolic' importance within the culture that it demanded separate attention for itself."³⁴³

Willis, to his credit, does make it clear that "the article arises from a report of a specific case study and makes no claims to universal validity"³⁴⁴, a rider which fails to resurface in the text of its later amplified form which has for all its many faults become the standard work upon which sociological understanding of the British motorcycle subculture, both historical and contemporary, has been founded and continues to be reproduced year after year in a multiplicity of publications.

Today, Willis's work is of little relevance to the phenomenon identifiable as the outlaw motorcycle subculture, and whilst it possesses passing interest for the more dedicated student of the subject, many of its conclusions should be taken with a very large pinch of salt. He does, however, identify a distinct sub-

group, which he terms the 'motor-bike boys' within the ranks of motorcycle riders as a whole, and accords them a thread of continuity which transcends the particular historical moment, which in itself represents a massive perceptual breakthrough wholly neglected in the work of Willis's fellow subcultural theorists.

The single remaining product of British sociology which focusses upon the motorcycle subculture is an eminently forgettable book ambitiously entitled *Double Zero: Five Years with Rockers and Hell's Angels in an English City* (1973), by David Collyer, vicar and resident warden of the church-sponsored motorcycle club where, coincidentally, Willis conducted his research. Collyer's writing, although vastly more embroidered and littered with superlatives than that of his intellectual mentor, nevertheless mirrors the former's in style and content so closely that, were one to be involved in the world of publishing litigation, writs for plagiarism would immediately spring to mind. Apart from which it has no merit whatsoever unless the reader wants to join in singing along with the words of the motor-bike boys' favourite hymns, thoughtfully included by way of appendices.

That about sums up conventional sociological wisdom on the subject of the motorcycle subculture, outlaw or otherwise, the bulk of which consists of a confused mixture of obsessive tunnel-vision theory about the dictatorial powers of music and fashion, on the one hand, and degenerative assumptions, based largely on hearsay and innuendo, about the paranoid psyches of 'lower class gang members', on the other. Neither of these approaches serve to further our understanding of the evolution and contemporary structure of the outlaw motorcycle subculture one iota.

The first, in my view extremely condescendingly, assumes that every working class teenager takes their particular subcul-

tural cue from the latest development in the world of rock and roll, dutifully returning to the parental fold having achieved the age of majority, a model of mature acquiescence. It takes no account of the historical, self-generated cultural underpinnings of the subculture concerned, denies all possibility of internal momentum, denigrates the richness and complexity of the subcultural form, and relegates its adherents to the position of mere artefacts of mass consumerism. Whilst the second, equally riddled with middle class ethnocentricity, relies upon the sort of socio-psychological claptrap much beloved by deviancy theorists, particularly American deviancy theorists, to explain why those who find themselves in a vastly inferior structural position in society might, instead of either knuckling under to the 'inevitable' or following their radical superiors towards some glorious proletarian nirvana, choose to adopt a 'reactive ideology' and band together in defence of their interests, interests often just as real as imagined.

These very conflicting explanatory models of the outlaw motorcycle subculture, the one seeking to bracket it alongside a whole succession of other, at first glance, directly comparable subcultures - teds, mods, punks, skinheads, heavy metal freaks, rockabillys, etc., etc., etc. - that have appeared, flourished briefly, and then, apart from a handful of diehard acolytes, become neatly reassimilated into bourgeois society; and the other explaining it in terms of hardcore deviancy, in which the participants, latent psychopaths preoccupied with a warped desire for phallic extension, are few in number and totally divorced from their less virulently committed motorcycle riding peers.

Neither of these theories, however deeply ingrained in popular mythology they may be, come anywhere near to providing us

with a satisfactory explanation for the extraordinary longevity and cohesiveness of the outlaw motorcycle subculture. Before going on to air my own conclusions, I will repeat the statement I made in the introduction - the biker phenomenon defies conceptualisation as a delinquent youth subculture which would, by definition, adopt a transient and class-bound social form organised around a particular 'flavour of the year' pattern of commodity consumption. Nor can it be conceptualised in the same way as the 'violent gang' (n.b. Yablonsky, 1962) which arises out of specifically localised conditions, and whose further development is both controlled and constrained by such conditions. And furthermore, it cannot be classified as a specifically criminal subculture whose membership and organisational structure is geared primarily to the pursuit of criminal rather than socio-cultural goals.

It is of course undeniable that, in the course of its worldwide development spanning more than forty years, the motorcycle subculture has both encompassed and assimilated many different contextual strands that have themselves been moulded by certain clearly defined patterns of commodity consumption - i.e. the British rockers - but the strong thread of historical/ideological continuity which both preempted and facilitated the emergence of such seemingly disparate motorcycle-borne sub-groups has served to ensure mass subcultural survival time and time again as its transient offshoots have lost coherence and fallen by the wayside. The sixties spawned thousands of seaside 'greasers' without bikes who appropriated the leather-clad style of the active rocker for as long as it suited their purposes, and yet, as tastes in fashion and music changed towards the end of the decade, and those less-committed individuals turned their attention to fresh avenues of group-expression, the motorcycle subculture consolidated itself

in another form and broadened its base accordingly. So much so, that today, it is, as I have said, a truly intergenerational phenomenon, attracting recruits well above the age of 'normal' subcultural involvement, many maintaining an active participatory role well into their late thirties and beyond.

In fact, the overwhelming majority of outlaw motorcycle club members are over the age of twenty-five, usually employed, and often married with families, and yet their participation in subcultural activities appears not to be noticeably affected by such responsibilities. Furthermore, there is no one particular musical genre which attracts common interest - somewhat surprisingly, heavy metal music, the genre usually associated with bikers by the uninformed, is near universally loathed, its over-dressed fans being regarded with disdain as nothing more than pseudo-bikers - and the dictates of fashion, outside of internally-generated variations on the theme of the ubiquitous garb of leather and denim, are ignored. For the biker rider, clothing is selected first and foremost for its functional properties, its ability to keep the worst of the elements at bay and to ensure maximum protection of the wearer's skin in the event of a spill.

The studded leather jacket or the one-percenter patch might well be endowed with meanings placed upon them by the casual, or indeed the professional observer, but for the wearer, their preferred meanings are rooted firmly within the value structure of the subculture itself and pay not the slightest heed to public opinion, however inconvenient that can and does prove in being refused service in public houses and restaurants.

As for the socio-psychological school of thought which classifies the outlaw motorcycle subculture much more narrowly in terms of an elite stratum of specifically crime-orientated deviant

gangs, for whom the attachment to motorcycling is nowadays purely symbolic, this too, as I trust I have been able to prove, is a fallacy. Of course it is of fundamental importance to distinguish between the vast majority of motorcycle riders and the outlaw minority, but this distinction has far less to do with the latter group's disproportionate involvement in illegal activities than it has to do with the wholly disproportionate role that the common denominator 'motorcycle' has to play in the lives of the outlaws as opposed to their ride-to-work/sporting colleagues. For the outlaw bikers, the activity of motorcycling has developed into a central life interest, transcending the functional requirements of transport and ordering the perceptual realities of their social world. They interact through and around the motorcycle, which gives their lives meaning and substance, and conditions relations both within the subculture and without.

The public persona of the subculture, the pure folk devil in the form of the death's head-emblazoned Hells Angel, is merely the most visible tip of the subcultural ice-berg, the body of which contains hundreds of thousands of adherents. Most of those who would identify themselves as one-percenters do not belong to formally organised outlaw clubs, and have not the slightest desire to join. Nevertheless, stylistically and ideologically they mirror the pattern of life idealised by, or just as often, erroneously attributed to, their more extreme peers, albeit suitably modified to remain compatible with the external constraints of work and family relationships. It is the recognition of different status gradations or sub-strata within the wider subculture which is essential to grasp if we are to achieve an understanding of the empirical base upon which the oft-repeated myths have been founded. The impression that the members of outlaw clubs are somehow recruited out of the ether, with no

previous experience in, or ongoing attachment to, the parent biker subculture, is an absurdity only equalled by the F.B.I.'s contention that wearing patches and riding choppers is a cleverly devised disguise behind which lurks the sinister hand of organised crime.

No, if I were to attempt to cram the sum total of the empirical evidence on the outlaw motorcycle subculture gleaned during the course of four years research into either of the theoretical boxes offered by the conventional schools of thought, I would be doing both the subject of my study and the sociological profession a grave disservice. I suppose it would have been possible to write the whole thing off as a theoretical enigma which owes something to each perspective, comprising as it does, both historically and contemporarily, elements of both mass subculture and deviant gang, but such a makeshift compromise is not of itself sufficient to explain the extraordinary pervasiveness and longevity of the subculture. What we must do therefore is radically revise the sixties-inspired analytical guidelines laid down by our forebears in the field of subcultural/deviancy theory and work out a fresh approach towards contemporary subcultures which refuse to align themselves with our commonly agreed conceptual parameters.

Fundamental and far-reaching economic changes have taken place in society since the acknowledged pundits of subcultural - read youth-cultural - theory penned their recipes for our understanding of how, why and where the participants did what they did. Patterns of commodity consumption have altered drastically; the working class has become fragmented, their focal concerns diffuse and conditioned by uncertainty; and an increasingly large absolute surplus population has taken its place alongside the ranks of the employed and semi-employed. New ways of 'making

do' and 'getting by' have been forced upon a sector of the community for whom the alternatives consist of a choice between a working life of unremitting and equally unrewarding boredom or signing on the dole twice a month. It isn't any longer a question of how one chooses to spend one's leisure time pending the onset of family life, so much as how one is able to ensure one's survival in a world where the work/leisure dichotomy has become meaningless. Small wonder that so many young, and not so young, people opt for the certainty of future and clarity of being in the world offered to them in the form of long-term sub-cultural membership, providing as it does both a sustaining ideology and a value structure more tangible and more permanent than that offered by the 'real world'.

In the shops, the sales of popular records and fashion clothes have plunged to a nadir from which it seems unlikely they will recover. One easily distinguished subcultural strands have become confused and interwoven into a complexity of groupings who owe their continuing existence to no one particular ensemble of commercially produced artefacts. Formerly disparate and antagonistic subcultures have achieved an accommodation that would have been an impossibility in the sixties, when mods, rockers, skinheads and the rest were immediately classifiable on appearance alone - appearance which would be more than sufficient to tell the observer all he wanted to know about the class origin, group allegiance, musical tastes and likely future of the individual concerned. The heady days of the mass subcultural movement which peaked with such an intensity during the 1960s and '70s is today in irreversible decline, and all our theories concerning them as anachronistic as the social forms which they purport to explain.

Likewise, comprehensive accounts of the daily lives and focal concerns of predominantly American juvenile delinquent gang

members on the one hand, or adult professional criminals on the other, fascinating as they undoubtedly are, tell us little or nothing of practical value about the composition of broadly-based subcultural movements in the 1980s. We are not dealing with groups whose primary motive for joining together, and staying together, is the acquisition of wealth through illegal means, but wider subcultural movements for whom certain forms of criminal activity, although in clear contravention of the law of the land, are nonetheless, within the context of the rules which govern the subcultural lifestyle, deemed to be perfectly legitimate pursuits. In the case of the outlaw motorcycle subculture, as I have said, the sale and distribution of soft drugs and stolen motorcycle parts are considered de rigeur forms of in-group behaviour for members of one-percenter clubs, and the penalties on getting caught accepted as part and parcel of everyday life. As in the case of the Rastafarian predilection for the consumption of marijuana or the gipsies for car ringing, collective profit through crime is rarely a consideration, and whilst some individuals may earn a living through their full-time involvement in the soft drugs trade, their potential earning power is strictly tempered by their ongoing commitment to club membership. Internecine violence between outlaw clubs is admittedly a reality which periodically brings bikers to the attention of the police and the press, but this too has no identifiable basis in the pursuit of criminal interests, being overwhelmingly a product of infractions of the commonly understood rules governing patch wearing and territorial suzerainty.

Although the outlaw motorcycle subculture can in some ways be compared with certain other contemporary intergenerational subcultures, most notably Rastafarians and latter-day hippies, it nonetheless possesses a uniqueness which sets it apart from

both these examples. In essence, it is probably better conceptualised as a kind of gipsy/travelling subculture, based as it is upon a means of mobility, the motorcycle, and a core set of values which, when taken together, bear a marked similarity to those which characterise the more traditional forms of 'travelling peoples'. The major points of congruity are as follows:

1/ The outlaw motorcycle subculture is intergenerational.

It has been in existence in an identifiable subcultural form since the end of World War II, and has roots which go back even further. Individuals rarely commit themselves to a subcultural career before the age of twenty, and many maintain a high level of active participation well into their late-thirties and often beyond. Sometimes three generations of the same family may be involved, maintaining a thread of continuity unknown in other mass subcultures. A sense of shared cultural history is an important unifying element amongst the bikers.

2/ The outlaw motorcycle subculture is international.

It transcends national and racial boundaries, and is to be found as far apart as Alaska and Australasia, Sweden and South Africa. Furthermore, it is not the exclusive preserve of the white English-speaking peoples, but attracts participation from those ethnic groups who would not normally be associated with Western-based subcultures. There is a keen following amongst the Maori population of New Zealand, and working class American blacks. It is even identifiable behind the Iron Curtain, where outlaw style Harley-Davidson motorcycle clubs thrive in Rumania, Czechoslovakia, East Germany and Poland, the latter recently having celebrated its fiftieth anniversary.

In all cases, the indigenous motorcycle subcultures share the same stylistic roots, value structures, subcultural career

patterns and codes of in-group behaviour, however vast the differences in their respective parent national, ethnic, political or class cultures. They share too a common core vocabulary, in which a set of internationally recognised key words have been incorporated into the various national languages, enhancing communications and facilitating a strong international bond of solidarity. The Hells Angels, certainly the most prominent, but by no means the only outlaw motorcycle club to have formal international links, has constituent chapters in thirteen countries, and language/cultural differences appear to present no problems whatsoever.

3/ The outlaw motorcycle subculture is inter-class.

It is inter-class because it can no longer be conceptualised simply as just another offshoot of white, lower class gang culture. True, its early adherents were drawn almost exclusively from the ranks of the working class and the value structure/focal concerns of the subculture to a large extent mirrored those of the overarching parent culture, but its evolution over four decades has brought about such a sense of permanency and internal subcultural solidity that it no longer enjoys the same cultural/ideological congruity. Since the early 1970s, the class composition of the motorcycle subculture has become considerably more diffuse, attracting recruits from the middle class in significant numbers, particularly in North America and Europe. And, more latterly, the membership has included those drawn from the long-term unemployed, the displaced working class whose admission over time will undoubtedly have an effect on the ideological underpinnings of the subculture as a whole.

4/ The outlaw motorcycle subculture is mobile.

In common with earlier travelling cultures, but unlike the vast majority of latter day mass subcultures, the outlaw motor-

cycle subculture is quintessentially founded upon a means of individual mobility - the motorcycle - and routinely celebrates the crucial importance of that ongoing mobility in what is perhaps its most fundamental form of ritualistic activity - the run.

The run not only serves to reaffirm group solidarity and individual commitment, but just as importantly emphasises continued subcultural attachment to motorcycling as a cultural pursuit. And, apart from the organised runs which are a common feature of subcultural life the world over, individual and group mobility is a central plank of biker ideology, 'life on the road' being idealised to such an extent that commitment is judged by distances covered and events attended. Many bikers become virtually nomadic during the summer riding season, travelling far from home across state and national boundaries. Conversely, those who merely appropriate the biker style of dress, but either don't own their own bike, or if they do, don't ride it, are vilified and discouraged from seeking membership.

As in traditional gipsy cultures, where horses and caravans are highly prized not only as a means of mobility, but also as objects of beauty in themselves, reflecting individual status within the group, so too is the biker's means of mobility celebrated in other than purely functional ways. Factory-produced motorcycles are extensively reconstructed to conform to the rider's preferred style and tailored to meet his or her individual requirements. Many are built from the ground up, owing nothing except their basic mechanical internals to mass production. The skills of the builder, or the builder's club, are reflected in the appearance of his mount. Builders compete against each other at organised custom shows for top honours in various areas of the customising art - paint, design, engineering, etc..

etc., - and trade knowledge and parts with fellow builders. There is a very close analogy between the custom bike show and the gipsy horse fair: both serve to celebrate the contextual essentiality of their chosen means of mobility; both place great emphasis on the individual's ability to refine and improve the breed; and both act as a gathering place for the exchange of subculturally related skills and commodities.

5/ The outlaw motorcycle has at its core a network of individual tribal/family groupings. It is impossible to say how great a proportion of outlaw bikers belong to formally-organised motorcycle clubs, but it is an undeniable fact that, whatever their actual numerical strength, such clubs have historically and ideologically dictated the parameters of style and in-group behaviour appropriate to the wider subculture, and continue to dominate all forms of social interaction therein.

The archetypical outlaw motorcycle club is, as we have seen, not the sort of one-dimensional, adolescent street gang that sociologists like Montgomery make it out to be, but a much more complex, cohesive tribal unit which offers to its members support and succour in all aspects of their daily lives. As such, it is directly comparable to the extended family grouping of traditional and, to a far lesser extent, contemporary gipsy culture. Something that is rarely understood by the uninitiated observers is that gipsy 'families' are as often as not unrelated by blood, but are instead tied to one another by bonds of loyalty formed over several generations of travelling folk. Travellers, like one-percenter club members, are outsiders by declaration, and have a tendency to attract adverse societal reaction because of it. Thus, the formation of affective groups for reasons of personal and collective protection makes sound common sense. Individuals may come and go, but the outlaw clubs continually reform and

expand their territorial links, establishing new constituent chapters in other areas and consolidating their respective bases.

Formal and informal links are strong and enduring; obligations of mutual support in the face of external threats clearly understood; and peer group discipline binding on all participants. Individuals who err in the eyes of the group may, if their transgression is considered sufficiently serious, be ostracised and their right to bear the family/club name removed. Again, this is a practice common to both cultures. Those to whom such treatment is accorded are unlikely to be made welcome by other clubs, their names reviled and their company shunned, even amongst the mass of unaligned bikers.

Interneecine rivalry can result in violent conflict, but more usually, hostile clubs are able to settle their differences through well-rehearsed channels of negotiation involving the intervention of a neutral party. The major subcultural gatherings provide a forum for the airing of grievances and serve to minimise the possibility of misunderstanding giving rise to dispute. Here too, we find an example of inter-group regulation similar to that found within gipsy culture, where the commonly approved gipsy council informally adjudicates on questions of factional rivalry.

6/ The outlaw motorcycle subculture, whilst not overtly criminal, is nevertheless subject to widespread public and official hostility. As travelling subcultures, both bikers and gipsies bring themselves to the attention of the authorities in a way that other non-mobile subcultures, deviant or otherwise, are able to avoid. The legion of myths surrounding the behavioural traits of groups of individuals identified as belonging to either culture are enough to ensure that their appearance in a strange neigh-

bourhood will be unwelcome. As we have seen from F.B.I. reports and those of other law enforcement bodies, it is the bikers mobility, rather than their innate criminality, which causes the authorities the greatest consternation. And, like gipsies, they are checked for vehicle documentation and moved along at the slightest pretext. The spread of clubs is viewed as alarming and much police time is spent in tracing the movement of members across state and national boundaries, and devising new and improved techniques for blocking their progress.

We must therefore conclude, on the basis of the evidence provided, that the outlaw motorcycle subculture, like the gipsy culture which preceded it, will not go away of its own volition. And, the greater the pressure that the police and the legislators of many countries exert upon it to do so, the greater the degree of internal solidity brought about as a result. As motorcycle sales continue to plummet and restrictive safety legislation forces the non-committed user to turn to alternative modes of transport, it seems likely that the outlaw motorcycle subculture will become even further estranged from its non-outlaw bike-riding peers, and will undergo a progressive shift towards increased tribalisation. In conditions of economic decline, when the state redefines its role in the arena of public order, it is the presence in the community of groups who resolutely refuse to conform to the strictures of what the state defines as appropriate ways to behave who will inevitably find themselves in the firing line. It remains to be seen whether the present well-orchestrated campaign against the outlaw motorcycle subculture will be stepped up. But whatever happens, it looks as though it's going to be interesting.

In a Los Angeles television interview, ex-Biker Enforcement Team agent Scott Barnes gave his opinion on the form that future

operations might take:

"(B.E.T. is finished), but now it's more, they want to target them more. We know we can't do what we did before, so if we're going to target them somebody has got to kill them."

Interviewer:

"Kill the Angels?"

Barnes:

"Yes, somebody will have to get them."

Interviewer:

"Can you say that again?"

Barnes:

"The Angels are aware, since me talking and Darwin (a fellow ex-B.E.T. agent turned R.I.C.O. defence witness) talking, and discovering that there was a secret conspiracy and there was a B.E.T. operation, so that is not going to work again. So if you want to get somebody, you get him with a gun this time ..."

Interviewer:

"You think there will be an escalation of violence? There are going to be Angels killed for instance?"

Barnes:

"Perhaps it won't be with guns. I think there will be car accidents, accidental drownings maybe ..., they are going to be more sophisticated and use more in-depth intelligence ... That's the attitude now. Newsweek, I think two months ago, put in a little article - 'the F.B.I. is going to try and go after the Hells Angels again'. These things aren't true per se, they're just trying to plant evidence in the public's eyes. They know they can't go after them as in the B.E.T. operation, 'cause that's been exposed. But there is still talk about the Angels.

that they are much more intelligent, plus they have got some good attorneys watchdogging for them. From now on, the feds are going to have to recruit somebody out of Texas or out of Mexico or out of Canada - somebody who doesn't know the area, doesn't know the people, nobody knows them. Then they will say, 'Boom, get rid of this guy. Get intelligence information; find out if this guy is going to be riding his chopper through this park or whatever; find out something pretty solid; set him up for an accident.'

Hells Angel:

"If we waited for the next rape to come up, the next scheduled rape, or the next scheduled Altamont, where we all get together and decide to knife a nigger because it happened he was shooting at us, it'd be pretty boring. They'd have to be pretty patient. We're not gonna be causing any sensations. They either have to put up with us or kill us, 'cause they can't ship us anywhere, nowhere else'll take us. And they Goddam sure can't talk us into quitting. Shoot us, or get used to us. And if you decide to shoot us, you'd better get everybody in the first shot. That's right, if they shoot one they've got two thousand shots coming back at 'em. So they'd better be ready to fight if they try to tell us there ain't gonna be no more Hells Angels. They'd better get it on ..."³⁴⁵

APPENDIX I

INDEX OF BRITISH MOTORCYCLE CLUBS.

ANARCHISTS-KENT

1972-1974

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Kent, N.W.

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels - Cambridge, Soam,
Kent.

Colours: Red, black, yellow - large A in
circle.

Membership approx.: 10

Small loose knit club on outskirts of S.E.
London, half of whose membership went into
Hells Angels-Kent and Essex, and briefly
Outlaws-Kent.

ANGELS OF DEATH

1970-1972?

No. of chapters: 1

Location: London, S.E.

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Unknown

Colours: Winged skull

Membership approx.: 6

Small loose knit club, some of whose
membership formed Hells Angels-Kent.

AQUILLA-DEVON

197?-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Plymouth, Devon

Formerly: Hells Angels-Aquilla, Drifters
M.C.

Assoc.: Satans Slaves-Devon, Reapers-
Somerset, Scorpio-Cornwall, Hells
Angels-Windsor and Wolverhampton.

Colours: Blue on white.

Membership approx.: 15

BARBARIAN GYPSIES

1982-3

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Leamington Spa, Warwicks.

Formerly: -

Assoc.: -

Colours: Green on white, gipsy's head.

Membership approx.: 6

Forcibly disbanded by Pagans-Warwickshire.

BASTARDS-ESSEX

1969-1980

No. of chapters.: 2

Location: Billericay, Cottesshall, Essex.

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Until 1974 Hells Angels-Essex, but
at war thereafter.

Colours: Yellow and black.

Membership approx.: 25

Disbanded in 1980 after protracted war with
Hells Angels-Essex and later Hells Angels-
England.

BERKSHIRE EAGLES

Nothing known

BERSERKERS-DE CYMRU

1982-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Formerly: United Bikers,-Cardiff

Assoc.: Y Brawdoliaeth-Cymru, Hells Angels-Kent.

Colours: Red, black and white - skull with snake.

Membership approx.: 8

BLACK ANGELS-North
East

1977

No. of chapters: 1

Location: North Yorkshire coast

Nothing more known. Appeared in film 'Tommy'.

BLACK ANGELS-TIGER
BAY

1976

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Nothing more known.

BLUE ANGELS-GLASGOW

1970-

No. of chapters: 1 (plus loose members in
Scotland and Leeds.

Location: Glasgow

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Unknown

Colours: Hells Angels' deaths head

Membership approx.:

Old established and largest Scottish club.

Not been south of the border since 1972 when
they had their colours stripped by Hells
Angels-England.

BLUE ANGELS-LEEDS

Small offshoot of above.

BROTHERS-WEST LONDON

1982-3

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Streatham, Croydon, Wimbledon.

Formerly: National Chopper Club-West London
Assocs.: Road Rats-London
Colours: Unknown
Membership approx.: 10
Disbanded by Road Rats-London.

CHOSEN FEW-DORSET

1976-

No. of chapters: 1 (plus loose members in
Devon, Leicester & Epping
Forest)

Location: Poole, Bournemouth

Formerly: Chosen Few-Kent & Essex, National
Chopper Club-Kent & Essex, Dorset
Big Bike Club

Assocs.: Hells Angels-South Coast

Colours: Gold Sword

Membership approx.: 15

Formed in three areas originally out of dis-
affected members of the N.C.C., but forced to
converge on Dorset after troubles with Hells
Angels-Kent & Essex. No current dispute with
Hells Angels-England.

CHOSEN FEW-SHEFFIELD

1977-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Sheffield, South Yorks

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-England

Colours: Blue and white skull

Membership approx.:

No connection with Chosen Few-Dorset. Rec-
ently changed colours from red on white at
request of Hells Angels-England.

COMMANCHES-KENT

1967-1969

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Kent, N.F.

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-North West Kent

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 20

Amalgamated in the late Seventies with Hells Angels-North West Kent to form Hells Angels-Kent.

CRAZYHORSE II

1968?

Nothing known.

CYCLE TRAMPS-NOMADS

1978-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Birmingham

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Wolverhampton

Colours: Red on white, red Indian head

Membership approx.: 25

Involved in a protracted war with the Sixty-Nine-West Mids. and Outcasts-Midlands.

DARK HORSE-WILTSHIRE 1977-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Westbury, Warminster, Wilts

Formerly: United Bikers,-Wilts

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Windsor, Berserkers-
De Cymru

Colours: Red and black

Membership approx.: 10

DESPERADOES OUTLAWS 1977-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Forest of Dean

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Wolf Outlaws-Cheltenham, Outcasts-
Midlands, Sixty-Nine-West Mids.

Colours: -

Membership approx.: 15

DEVILS HENCHMEN-

1977-

NORTH WALES

No. of chapters: 1

Location: North Welsh coast, South Merseyside

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Windsor

Colours: -

DIABLOS-LEICESTER

Nothing known

DEVIL RIDERS-DEVON

1973?

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Plymouth

Nothing more known

DRAGONS-NORTH WEST

197?

No. of chapters:

Location: Manchester

Nothing more known

DRIFTERS-DEVON

1973?

Nothing more known

FAMILY

1977-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: East London

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: None

Membership approx.: Varies

Loose knit club formed and led by Buttons, former founder of Hells Angels-England and ex-President of Hells Angels-London. Has uneasy relationship with Hells Angels-Essex.

DRUIDS-SHEFFIELD

1980-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Sheffield

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels alliance

Colours: Red on blue

Membership approx.:

DRUIDS-SOUTH COAST

1967-1975

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Southampton

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Cotswolds, London, Wessex, West Coast Windsor, Wolverhampton. Member of Hells Angels Amalgamation

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: 10

Disbanded to form Hells Angels-South Coast

FILTHY FEW-COVENTRY

1976-7

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Coventry

Formerly: -

Assoc.: -

Colours: -

Membership approx.: 10

Forcibly disbanded by Outlaws-Coventry and
Slaves-Coventry

FILTHY FEW-NORFOLK

No. of chapters: Unknown

Location: Kings Lynn

Nothing more known. No connection with above.

FILTHY FEW-ESSEX

Nothing known. No connection with above

FREEWHEELING

1967-1973

WESSEX

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Hampshire and Berkshire

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, London,
Birmingham, Sussex, West Coast,
Wolverhampton, Cotswolds, Druids-South
Coast

Colours: Red on white, skull above motorcycle
(face on)

Membership approx.: 35

Disbanded to form Hells Angels-Wessex

FREEWHEELERS-

Nothing known

LEICESTER

GIPSY JOKERS

Nothing known.

GIPSY WARLORDS-

1977-1976

MIDS

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cotswolds, Oxford, South Warwicks.

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Red on white

Membership approx.: 20

Disbanded to form Hells Angels-Midlands.

GRAVE DIGGERS

No. of chapters:

Location: North Yorks, Ripon, Swinton Forest

Nothing more known.

GRIM REAPERS-EAST 1982-

SUSSEX

No. of chapters:

Location: East Sussex, Arundel, Worthing

Formerly: Mad Dogs-Sussex and others

Assocs.: -

Colours: Black on white, grim reaper

Membership approx.: 50-70

HANGMEN-KENT

1968-1967

Nothing known

HEAD HUNTERS-WILTS Nothing known

HELLS ANGELS-

1977-1982

ARMAGH

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Armagh, Northern Ireland

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-England, Europe

Colours: Hells Angels, red on white

Membership approx.: 8

Disbanded in 1982 to become Hells Angels hang-around club. Currently Hells Angels Europe prospect club.

HELLS ANGELS-

1986-

ASHFIELD

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Sutton-In-Ashfield, Notts
Formerly: Mofos
Assocs.: Member of Hells Angels-England
Colours: Hells Angels, red on white
Membership approx.: 9

HELLS ANGELS-
BIRMINGHAM

1967-1973
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Birmingham
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, Sussex,
Windsor, Wolverhampton, Druids-South Coast
Forcibly disbanded by Hells Angels-Windsor and
Wessex.

HELLS ANGELS-
BULL RING

No. of chapters: Unknown
Location: Birmingham
Nothing more known.

HELLS ANGELS-
CAMBRIDGE

1970-1975
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Cambridge
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Hells Angels-Soam, Anarchists-Kent
Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white
Membership approx.: Unknown
Voluntarily disbanded.

HELLS ANGELS-
CHELSEA BRIDGE

Nothing known.

HELLS ANGELS-
COTSWOLDS

1967-1973
No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cheltenham, Gloucester

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, Sussex,
West Coast, Windsor, Wolverhampton, London,
Freewheeling Wessex, Druids South Coast, Nomads
South London, Road Rats-London

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 15

Decimated by imprisonment of members following
Chelsea bridge shooting in 1971. Disbanded two
years later, some members joining Hells Angels-
West Coast.

HELLS ANGELS-
COVENTRY

1981

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Coventry

Formerly: Hells Angels-Wolverhampton prospect
club.

Assocs.: -

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 7

Disbanded.

HELLS ANGELS -

1977-1978

DARLINGTON aka. No. of chapters: 1

DIRTY DOSSERS Location: Darlington, South Yorks

OF DARLINGTON Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-Dewsbury, Gateshead

Colours: Unknown

Membership approx.: Unknown

HELLS ANGELS-
DERBY

1977-1985

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Dewsbury, South Yorks

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Darlington, Gateshead

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: Unknown

HELLS ANGELS-
ENGLAND

1969-

No. of chapters: 11

Location: Essex, Kent, Lea Valley, London,
South Coast, Tyne and Wear, Wessex, West Coast,
Windsor, Wolverhampton, Ashfield, Midlands,
1976-1980, now disbanded.

Formerly: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, London,
South Coast, Midlands, Tyne and Wear, Wessex,
West Coast, Mofos, and Madcaps Herts

Assoc.: Chosen Few Dorset, Chosen Few Shef-
field, Mofos, Wolf Outlaws Cheltenham, Tramps,
Road Rats London, Y Brawdolaith Cymru, Berser-
kers De Cymru, Hawksmoon B.C., Sidewinders East
Coast, Trojans South East, Hells Angels Armagh,
Scorpio-Cornwall. Allied with all chartered
Hells Angels clubs in U.S.A., Canada, Alaska,

Brazil, France, Denmark, Germany, Austria
Switzerland, Australia, New Zealand.

Colours: Official Hells Angels, red on white
Membership approx.: 200

Founded in 1969 when Hells Angels London rece-
ived its charter from the United States, Hells
Angels-England was joined by Hells Angels-West
Coast in 1974, and later by the five remaining
'Amalgamation' clubs -Essex, Kent, Midlands,
South Coast and Wessex - between 1976 and '79.

Tyne and Wear received their charter in 1978. Midlands disbanded in 1980, and Madcaps-Herts, having initially prospected, but fallen below the required six members, disbanded in 1983 and joined London. Hells Angels-Windsor, after a long and bloody war with England over the right to wear a Hells Angels patch, culminating in the New Forest shooting of Easter 1979, finally agreed to prospect for a charter in 1983, and were followed by Hells Angels-Wolverhampton in 1984. The Mofos, having been friendly towards England for over ten years, split in 1984 over the question of whether or not to prospect for a Hells Angels charter. Sutton-In-Ashfield becoming an England hangaround club and North Lincs remaining Mofos. In 1985, the former Madcaps left Hells Angels London and reformed as Hells Angels Lea Valley. Hells Angels-England are the only officially recognised Hells Angels chapters in this country, being allied with and wearing the same colours as chartered Hells Angels clubs throughout the world. All other Hells Angels clubs in Britain are deemed to be bogus by Hells Angels-England, and hence subject to forcible disbandment. Hells Angels-England are by far the largest and most prolific motorcycle club in Britain, boasting more members organised in a greater number of chapters than any other.

HELLS ANGELS-ESSEX 1968-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: East London, Essex

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Until 1973 - Hells Angels-Kent, London, Cotswolds, West Coast, Birmingham, Nightingale, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Sussex, Druids South Coast, Bastards-Essex, Nomads-South London, Mofos, Freewheeling Wessex.

1973-1976 - Member of Hells Angels Amalgamation with Hells Angels-Kent, Midlands, South Coast, Wessex and Yorks

1976 - Member of Hells Angels-England

Colours: Hells Angels England

Membership approx.: 17

Hells Angels-Essex were at war with Road Rats-London from 1970-1976, their most dramatic battle occurring on Chelsea Bridge in 1971 when Ginger Pete, a leading member of Essex, was shot in the stomach during a fight involving several different clubs. They were also involved in a protracted war with the Bastards-Essex, who finally disbanded in 1980

Membership approx.: 15

HELLS ANGELS-

GATESHEAD

197?

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Gateshead, Newcastle

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Darlington, Dewsbury

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: Unknown

Disbanded to form Hells Angels-Tyne and Wear

HELLS ANGELS-GRIMSBY 198?-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Grimsby

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Member of Hells Angels 'Red-on-blue Alliance'

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on blue

Membership approx.: Unknown

HELLS ANGELS-HERTS

Nothing known

HELLS ANGELS-KENT

1969-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South East London, North West Kent

Formerly: Hells Angels-Commanches, Hells Angels-North West Kent and other smaller clubs

Assoc.: 1969-1973: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, London, Cotswolds, West Coast, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Sussex, Nightingale, Druids South Coast, Freewheeling Wessex

1973-1976: Member of Hells Angels Amalgamation with Hells Angels-Essex, Midlands, South Coast, Wessex and Yorks

1976 -: Member of Hells Angels-England

Colours: Hells Angels England

Membership approx.: 17

Hells Angels-Kent were at war with Road Rats-London from 1970-1976, and with Chosen Few-Kent from 1976-1978

HELLS ANGELS-
LFIGH PARK

1968-1970

No. of chapters: 1

	Location: Portsmouth
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: Unknown
	Colours: Unknown
	Membership approx.: Unknown
HELLS ANGELS-	1977
LIVERPOOL	Nothing known
HELLS ANGELS-	1968-
LONDON	No. of chapters: 1 (Originally 2, North London and South London)
	Location: London
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: 1968-1973: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Cotswolds, West Coast, Nightingale, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Sussex, Druids-South Coast, Nomads South London, Freewheeling Wessex, Mofos
	1973-1976: Hells Angels-West Coast
	1976: Hells Angels-England
	Charter member of Hells Angels-England since 1969
	Colours: Hells Angels England
	Membership approx.: 19
HELLS ANGELS-	1977-1985
MORTIS	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Doncaster
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: 'Red-on-Blue Alliance'
	Colours: Hells Angels red on white (later Hells Angels red on blue)

	Membership approx.: Unknown
	Were at war with northern Red on Blue 'Alliance' clubs. From 1983 member of 'Red on Blue Alliance'. Disbanded by Mofos in 1985
HELLS ANGELS-	198?-
MERCIA	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Unknown
	Formerly: -
	Assocs.: Hells Angels 'Red-on-Blue Alliance' clubs
	Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on blue
	Membership approx.: Unknown
HELLS ANGELS-	1976-1980
MIDLANDS	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Cotswolds, Oxford, South Warwicks
	Formerly: Gipsy Warlords-Midlands
	Assocs.: Hells Angels England
	Colours: Hells Angels England
	Membership approx.: 12
	Disbanded through dwindling membership in 1980, charter frozen and remaining members transferred to Hells Angels-Wessex and Kent
HELLS ANGELS-	1965-1977
NIGHTINGALE	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: South London, Croydon
	Formerly: Nightingale M.C.
	Assocs.: Hells Angels-Cotswolds, Essex, Kent, London, Birmingham, Sussex, West Coast, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Druids-South Coast, Nomads-South London, Road Rats-London, Sussex Hogs

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red, green
and white.

Membership approx.: 40

Did not join Amalgamation, but coexisted until
1976 when Amalgamation clubs went into Hells
Angels-England. Disbanded voluntarily in 1977

HELLS ANGELS-

NOMADS

198?-1984

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Luton, Beds.

Formerly: Nomads-North London

Assocs.: Unknown

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: 10

Forcibly disbanded by Hells Angels England

HELLS ANGELS-

NORTH LONDON

196?-1971

Loose knit forerunners of Hells Angels-London,
disappeared gradually after formation of Hells
Angels-England in 1969

HELLS ANGELS-

NORTH LONDON

198?-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Unknown

Formerly: Outcasts-North London

Assocs.: Hells Angels 'Red-on-Blue Alliance'

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on blue

Membership approx.: Unknown

HELLS ANGELS-

NOTTS

197?-1976

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Nottingham

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Unknown

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 15

Forcibly disbanded by Hells Angels-Midlands after dispute in 1976. Reformed as Notts Outlaws

HELLS ANGELS-

RATTAYF

1967-1985

Location: Leicester

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels 'Red-on-Blue Alliance',

formerly Hells Angels-Windsor and Wolverhampton

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on blue

Membership approx.: 12

Old established club, but membership fluctuates wildly. Guiding hand of Red on Blue 'Alliance'. Voluntarily disbanded in 1985. Reformed as Outcasts-Rattaye.

HELLS ANGELS-

SCORPIO

1977-1977

Location: Cornwall

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Aquilla-Devon

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: Unknown

Disbanded voluntarily to form Scorpio Cornwall

HELLS ANGELS-SOAM

1970-1977

Location: Cambridgeshire

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-Cambridge, Anarchists-Kent

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: Unknown

Small loose knit club who disbanded voluntarily

HELLS ANGELS-
SOUTH COAST

1975-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Southampton, Winchester, Portsmouth

Formerly: Druids-South Coast, Living Dead-
South Coast

Assocs.: 1975-1976: Member of Hells Angels
'Amalgamation' with Hells Angels-Essex, Kent,
Midlands and Wessex

1976- : Member of Hells Angels-England, Chosen
Few-Dorset

Colours: Hells Angels England

Membership approx.: 15

HELLS ANGELS-
SOUTH LONDON

1967-1969

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South London

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-North London

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: Unknown

Disbanded to form Hells Angels-London

HELLS ANGELS-S.F.
LONDON

1976

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South East London

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 6

Disbanded by Hells Angels-Kent

HELLS ANGELS-
SUNDERLAND

Forerunner of Hells Angels-Tyne and Wear

Nothing more known

HELLS ANGELS-	1970-1973
SUSSEX	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: West Sussex
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Cotswolds, London, West Coast, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Nightingale, Living Dead-South Coast, Druids-South Coast, Freewheeling Wessex
	Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white
	Membership approx.: Unknown
	Disbanded voluntarily
HELLS ANGELS-	1977?
TIGER BAY	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Cardiff
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: -
	Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white
	Membership: Unknown
HELLS ANGELS-	1974-
TYNE AND WEAR	No. of chapters: 1
	Formerly: Hells Angels-Gateshead, Sunderland
	Location: Newcastle, Sunderland
	Assoc.: 1979- : Member of Hells Angels-England
	Colours: Hells Angels England
	Membership approx.: 8
HELLS ANGELS-	1977-1980
VIKINGS	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Guildford, Surrey
	Formerly: -
	Assoc.: Vikings-Fire

HELLS ANGELS-
SUSSEX

1970-1973

No. of chapters: 1

Location: West Sussex

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, Kent,
Cotswolds, London, West Coast, Windsor, Wolver-
hampton, Nightingale, Living Dead-South Coast,
Druids-South Coast, Freewheeling Wessex

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: Unknown

Disbanded voluntarily

HELLS ANGELS-
TIGER BAY

1977?

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership: Unknown

HELLS ANGELS-
TYNE AND WEAR

1974-

No. of chapters: 1

Formerly: Hells Angels-Gateshead, Sunderland

Location: Newcastle, Sunderland

Assocs.: 1979- : Member of Hells Angels-England

Colours: Hells Angels England

Membership approx.: 8

HELLS ANGELS-
VIKINGS

197?-1980

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Guildford, Surrey

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Vikings-Fire

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: Unknown

Disbanded after dispute with Hells Angels-Wessex,

Reformed as Vikings-Nomads

HELLS ANGELS-

WALFS

1981

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Formerly: Outlaw Nomads

Assocs.: -

Colours: Hells Angels deaths head

Membership approx.: 6

Forcibly disbanded by Cardiff United Bikers.

Reformed as Renegade Breed-South Wales

HELLS ANGELS-

WESSEX

1973-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Hampshire and Berkshire

Formerly: Freewheeling Wessex

Assocs.: 1973-1976: Member of Hells Angels

Amalgamation with Hells Angels-Essex, Kent,

Midlands, South Coast and Yorks

1976- : Member of Hells Angels-England

Colours: Hells Angels England

Membership: 15

HELLS ANGELS-

WEST COAST

1967-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Bristol

Formerly: -

Assocs.: 1967-1973: Hells Angels-Birmingham,

Cotswolds, Essex, Kent, London, Sussex, Windsor,

Wolverhampton, Mofos, Satans Slaves-Devon

1974- : Member of Hells Angels-England
Colours: Hells Angels England
Membership: 13

HELLS ANGELS-
WEST RIDING

1977-1978
Location: West Yorkshire
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Unknown
Colours: Hells Angels deaths head
Membership: Unknown
Disbanded by Hells Angels-Tyne and Wear

HELLS ANGELS-
WINDSOR

1958-
Location: West London, Berkshire, Buckingham-
shire, Oxford
Formerly: -
Assocs.: 1958-1973: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent,
Cotswolds, London, Nightingale, Birmingham,
West Coast, Wolverhampton, Sussex, Road Rats
London, Freewheeling Wessex, Druids-South Coast
1973-1983: Hells Angels-Wolverhampton, Satans
Slaves, Berserkers-De Cymru, Mofos, Devils
Henchmen-North Wales, Scorpio-Cornwall, Hells
Angels-Rattaye
1984: Member of Hells Angels-England
Colours: Formerly, Hells Angels deaths head,
red, green, black and white. Now, Hells Angels
England
Membership approx.: 23
Declining to become a member of the Hells Angels
'Amalgamation', Hells Angels-Windsor continued
a loose alliance with Hells Angels-Wolverhampton,
Rattaye and Nightingale until 1976 when they

were given an ultimatum to join England. They declined, and subsequently found themselves at war with the now eight England clubs. This resulted in 1979 in the shooting of their president Dick Sharman and several other Windsor members. In 1982, peace negotiations with England resulted in their agreeing to prospect for a charter. Hells Angels-Windsor were also at war with the Road Rats-London from 1971-1980. They now maintain an uneasy truce.

HELLS ANGELS- 1964-

WOLVERHAMPTON No. of chapters: 1

Location: Wolverhampton

Formerly: -

Assocs.: 1964-1973: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, Cotswolds, London, Nightingale, Birmingham, West Coast, Windsor, Sussex, Rattaye, Road Rats-London, Freewheeling Wessex, Druids South Coast, Mofos
1973-1984: Hells Angels-Rattaye, Windsor, Mofos, Road Rats-London, Satans Slaves, Devils Henchmen-North Wales, Scorpio-Cornwall, Cycle Tramps-Nomads

1984- : Prospect club Hells Angels-England

Colours: Hells Angels red on white. Now Hells Angels-England

Membership approx.: 24

Declining to become a member of the Hells Angels 'Amalgamation', Wolverhampton continued a loose alliance with Hells Angels-Windsor and Rattaye, dropping the latter but continuing with the former, eventually following them into Hells Angels-England as a prospect club, a move which signifi-

cantly affected the balance of power in the Midlands, bringing in the Mofos at the same time and spreading Hells Angels-England throughout the country. Long time allies of both the Road Rats-London and the Satans Slaves, they have now dropped both these clubs. They were engaged in a virtually inactive war with Hells Angels-England from 1979-1983 when peace negotiations successfully ended the dispute. They are currently at war with the Outcasts-Midlands and are closely allied with the Cycle Tramps-Nomads. They are the last of the old established Hells Angels clubs to throw in their lot with Hells Angels-England. Charter members of Hells Angels-England since 1985.

HELLS ANGELS-
WORKSOP

1982-1985
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Worksop
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Red on Blue Hells Angels clubs
Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on blue
Membership approx.: Unknown
Member of 'Red on Blue Alliance'
Voluntarily disbanded 1985

HELLS ANGELS-
YORKS

1973-1975
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Hull
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Member of Hells Angels Amalgamation with Hells Angels-Essex, Kent and Wessex
Colours: Hells Angels deaths head, red on white

Membership approx.: 6

Disbanded in 1975 through dwindling membership,
the remaining members joining Hells Angels-Wessex

HELLS FIRE CLUB 1973-1975

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Medway Towns, Kent

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours:

Membership approx.: 10

Forcibly disbanded by Hells Angels-Kent

HIGHWAY DRIVERS- Location: Newbury, Berkshire

BERKS Nothing more known

IRON HORSEMEN- 1970-1977

PETERBOROUGH No. of chapters: 1

Location: Peterborough, Northants

Formerly: -

Nothing more known

ISLANDERS- 1977-

GUERNSEY No. of chapters: 1

Nothing more known

JOCKERS-SOUTH 1987-1983

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South West London

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Black question mark on yellow back-
ground

Membership: Unknown

Membership approx.: 6

Disbanded in 1975 through dwindling membership,
the remaining members joining Hells Angels-Wessex

HELLS FIRE CLUB 1973-1975

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Medway Towns, Kent

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours:

Membership approx.: 10

Forcibly disbanded by Hells Angels-Kent

HIGHWAY DRIVERS- Location: Newbury, Berkshire

BERKS Nothing more known

IRON HORSEMEN- 1970-1977

PETERBOROUGH No. of chapters: 1

Location: Peterborough, Northants

Formerly: -

Nothing more known

ISLANDERS- 1977-

GUERNSEY No. of chapters: 1

Nothing more known

JOKERS-SOUTH 1987-1983

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South West London

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Black question mark on yellow back-
ground

Membership: Unknown

LIVING DEAD-
SOUTH COAST

Forcibly disbanded by Road Rats-London

1967-1974

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Portsmouth

Formerly: -

Assocs.:

Colours:

Membership approx.: Unknown

After a short war with the 'Amalgamation' clubs,
the Living Dead were forcibly disbanded by Hells
Angels-Wessex and Windsor

LOST SOULS-
SHROPSHIRE

1983-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Shropshire

Nothing more known

LUCIFERS OUTLAWS
NORTHAMPTON

1983

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Northants

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Road Rats-London

Colours: Black on white

Membership approx.: Unknown

Small bikeless club that hit the headlines in 1983
when the president Michael Bardell murdered two
of his associates

MADCAPS-HERTS

1977-1983

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Watford

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-England

Colours: Yellow and black winged wheel

Membership approx.: 8

Hells Angels-England hangaround club for many years, finally prospected as a club in 1983, but fell below the required six members and joined Hells Angels-London. Became Hells Angels-Lea Valley in 1985, a chartered England club

MAD DOGS-SUSSEX 197?-197?

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Sussex coast

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Sussex Hogs

Colours: Unknown

Membership approx.: Unknown

Hit the headlines in 1972 when one of their members was found dead in Shoreham harbour and two others were convicted of his murder. The club subsequently broke up, but some members stayed together and joined the Grim Reapers-Sussex

MENDES

197?

No. of chapters: 2

Location: Essex, Suffolk

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Red on black goat of Mendes

Membership approx.: Unknown

MOFOS

196?-

No. of chapters: 2

Location: Sutton-In-Ashfield, Notts and North Lincs

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Birmingham, Essex, Kent, Cotswolds, London, Hattaye, South Coast, Windsor, Wolverhampton, Satans Slaves, Devils Henchmen-North Wales, Road Rats-London

Colours: Red hand on white background

Membership approx.: 40

Old established club that remained neutral throughout the troubles of the Seventies. In 1984, the Sutton-In-Ashfield chapter finally decided to follow Hells Angels-Wolverhampton into Hells Angels England, and became an England prospect club. Some members left to join the North Lincs chapter who still wore Mofos colours up until 1985 when they disbanded voluntarily

NOMADS-NORTH

198?

LONDON

Nothing known

NOMADS-SOUTH

1968-1971

LONDON

No. of chapters: 1

Location: S.F. London

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Essex, Kent, London, Windsor Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Nightingale, Road Rats London

Colours:

Membership approx.: 30

One of the first organised clubs in South London. Disbanded voluntarily, members joining several other clubs, including Hells Angels-Essex, Kent and London

NORSEMFEN-KENT

1975-1978

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Maidstone, Kent

Formerly: -

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Kent

Colours: Viking front patch

Membership approx.: 15

Disbanded voluntarily, some members joining
Hells Angels-Kent

NOTTS-OUTLAWS

1976-1987

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Nottingham

Formerly: Hells Angels-Notts

Assoc.: Unknown

Colours: Unknown

Membership approx.: Unknown

Formed after disbandment of Hells Angels-Notts
by Hells Angels-Midlands

OUTCASTS-DORSFT

1987-

Nothing known

OUTCASTS-MIDLANDS 1978-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Kidderminster, West Mids

Formerly: Hells Angels West Mids

Assoc.: Sixty-Nine-West Mids, Berserkers-De

Cymru, Wolf Outlaws-Cheltenham, Desperados

Outlaws, Y Twrch Trywth-Cymru, Tramps M.C.,

Pagans-Warwickshire, Slaves-Coventry

Colours: Black on white

Membership: 10

Constantly at war with Hells Angels-Wolverhampton and Cycle Tramps-Nomads.

No connection with above

OUTCASTS-NORTH

Nothing known

LONDON

No connection with above

OUTCASTS-GREAT

1977-

YARMOUTH

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Great Yarmouth

Formerly: Unknown, some members from Outcasts-North London

Assocs.: Member of 'Red on Blue Alliance'

Colours: Red on blue

Membership: Unknown

No connection with above

OUTLAWS-COVENTRY

1977-1981

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Coventry

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Unknown

Membership: Unknown

Forcibly disbanded by Slaves-Coventry

OUTLAWS-KENT

1974-1976

Location: North West Kent

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Black and white skull and cross bones

Membership approx.: 8

Disbanded voluntarily, some members joining Hells Angels-Kent. At war with Hells Angels-

Nightingale throughout their existence. No
'connection with above

OUTLAWS-WALES Nothing known. No connection with above.

OUTLAW NOMADS 1977
No. of chapters: 1
Location: South Wales
Nothing more known

PAGANS-HUMBERSIDE 1987-
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Unknown
Formerly: Unknown
Assocs.: Member of 'Red on Blue Alliance'
Colours: Red on blue
Membership: Unknown

PAGANS- 1983-
WARWICKSHIRE No. of chapters: 3 (North and South Warwick-
shire, Northampton)
Location: Warwickshire and Northants
Formerly: -
Assocs.: Slaves-Coventry, 'Red on Blue Alliance'
Sixty-Nine-West Mids, Pagan Sons-Northants
Colours: Blue and white skull and knife
Membership approx.: 35
Neutral club. No connection with above.
United with Pagan Sons in 1985. At war with
Outcasts since 1986.

PAGAN SONS- 1980-1985
NORTHANTS No. of chapters: 1
Location: Northampton
Formerly: -

Assocs.: Pagans Warwickshire

Colours: Unknown

Membership approx.: 10

Voluntarily disbanded in 1985 to join Pagans-Warwickshire

PARIAS-LEICESTER 1984-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Leicester

Formerly: Leicester National Chopper Club

Assocs.: Pagans-Warwickshire

Colours: Unknown

Membership approx.: 10

RATTLERS-WEST 1987-

YORKS

Nothing known

REAPERS-SOMERSET 1981-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Yeovil, Somerset

Formerly: Somerset-United Bikers

Assocs.: Aquilla-Devon, Scorpio-Cornwall,

Dark Horse-Wiltshire

Colours: Black on white grim reaper

Membership: Unknown

RENEGADES 1987-

Nothing known

RENEGADE BREFT- 1987-

WALES

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Brown and white winged wheel

Membership approx.: 6

Currently at war with Berserkers-De Cymru

ROAD HOGS-
SHROPSHIRE

Nothing known

ROAD RATS-LONDON

1967-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: South and West London

Formerly: Road Rats-London and Road Rats-Walton
On-Thames, Road Rats-Richmond

Assocs.: 1967-1971: Hells Angels-Windsor,
Nightingale, Wolverhampton

1971-1976: Hells Angels-Wolverhampton, Satans
Slaves

1976-1984: Hells Angels-England, Wolverhampton

Colours: Brown rat on white background, black
lettering

Membership approx.: 15

Traditionally a law unto themselves, the Road
Rats have always been in a state of war with
one club or another. Their early dispute with
Hells Angels-Essex over who controlled London
resulted in a mass fight and the near fatal
shooting of a leading member of Essex in 1971.
Thereafter they were engaged in a protracted war
with all the Hells Angels Amalgamation clubs,
plus Hells Angels-England and Windsor. They
maintained an uneasy truce with Hells Angels-
England after a peace agreement in 1976, but
trouble erupted again this year when three of
their members were stripped by Hells Angels
Holland. In 1983 they were involved in a bloody

battle at Cookham, Surrey with the Satans Slaves which resulted in the deaths of two of their members, Cowboy and Ozzie. In recent months the club has undergone a big split, losing approx. eight of its original and leading members. As six more are currently on trial, the club's future looks uncertain.

ROAD REBELS-
DYFED

1987-
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Haverfordwest, Dyfed
Nothing more known

ROGUES-BUCKS

1987-
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Aylesbury, Bucks
Nothing more known

SATANS SLAVES-
DEVON, YORKS
and LANCs

1974-
No. of chapters: Approx. 7
Location: Exeter, Devon, South Yorkshire, Manchester
Formerly: -
Assocs.: 1974-1983: Hells Angels-Windsor, Wolverhampton, Mofos, Devils Henchmen-North Wales
Colours: Black and white winged skull
Membership approx.: Over 30
After Hells Angels-England, the Satans Slaves are the second largest club in Britain. They rarely mix with other clubs, except for Hells Angels-Windsor and Wolverhampton and the Mofos, prior to those clubs aligning themselves with Hells Angels-England. In 1983 they were invol-

ved in a bloody battle with the Road Rats-
London during the Hells Angels Windsor's twenty-
fifth anniversary party, resulting in the deaths
of two members of the Road Rats and several
serious injuries on both sides, since which
time they have been ostracised by their former
allies. They have recently branched out into
Lancashire and established a chapter in Southern
Manchester. They have one chapter in Devon and
approx. five in South Yorkshire, mainly centred
around Shipley, Bradford and Leeds

SAXON OUTLAWS

1982

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Leamington Spa, Warwickshire

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Green on white

Membership approx.: 5

Voluntarily disbanded, some members forming
Pagans-South Warwickshire

SCORPIO-CORNWALL

1975-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cornwall

Formerly: Hells Angels-Scorpio

Assocs.: Aquilla-Devon, Hells Angels-Windsor,
Wolverhampton, Kent, Reapers-Somerset

Colours: Blue on white scorpion

Membership approx.: 10

SCORPIO-KENT

1967

Nothing known. No connection with above.

SIDEWINDERS-EARTH · 1977-1980

No. of chapters: 4

Location: Epping Forest and Southend, Essex,
Leeds, Middlesex

Formerly: -

Assoc.: -

Colours: Black on yellow, snake circling a
wheel

Membership approx.: 50

A club originally founded by members of the
Outlaws M.C.-U.S.A. stationed in Britain with
the U.S. Air Force. The Outlaws are bitter
rivals of the Hells Angels in North America
and desired to found a rival club to the Hells
Angels-England. Not wishing to alert suspicion
by using their own name they chartered
the British club in the name of another U.S.
club, the Sidewinders. Once this ploy was
discovered by Hells Angels-England they set
about disbanding the Sidewinders. After a few
minor incidents three of the Sidewinders
chapters voluntarily disbanded and the remain-
ing chapter severed all links with the Outlaws,
obtained an official charter from the Side-
winders M.C. U.S.A., and changed their bottom
rocker to Sidewinders-East Coast

SIDEWINDERS-
FAST COAST

1980-1985

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Essex

Formerly: Sidewinders-Earth

Assoc.: Hells Angels-Essex

Colours: As above

Membership approx.: 12

Forcibly disbanded in 1985 by Hells Angels-Essex

SIXTY-NINE-WEST

MIDS

1975-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Birmingham

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Outcasts-Midlands, Slaves-Coventry, Tramps M.C., Wolf Outlaws-Cheltenham, Y Brawdolaeth-Cymru, Y Twrch Trwyth-De Cymru, Cycle Tramps-Nomads, Berserkers-De Cymru, Desperados Outlaws-Forest of Dean

Colours: Orange on black, face on skull and motorcycle

Membership approx.: 15

Engaged in a protracted on/off dispute with Hells Angels-Wolverhampton and Cycle Tramps-Nomads in alliance with Outcasts-Midlands. At the moment they maintain an uneasy truce.

SLAVES-COVENTRY

1981-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Coventry

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Wolf Outlaws-Cheltenham, Sixty-Nine West Mids, Y Twrch Trwyth-Cymru, Desperados Outlaws-Forest of Dean, Pagans-Warwickshire
Colours:

Membership approx.: 8

Having forcibly disbanded their rival club in Coventry, the Outlaws, the Slaves promptly got involved in a battle with two 'Red on

Blue Alliance' clubs resulting in the imprisonment and departure of several of their members. Having reconstituted the club in 1983, they soon went to war with Hells Angels-Rattaye in Leicester, culminating in 1984 in an attack on a Rattaye member's home, which resulted in the arrest and remand in custody of the entire club on a variety of charges including possession of firearms. The future of the club looks bleak.

SONS OF HELL-
MANCHESTER

1980-
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Manchester
Assocs.: Unknown
Colours: Winged skull
Membership: Unknown

SONS OF SATAN-
NORFOLK

1977-1976
No. of chapters: 1
Location: Norwich
Assocs.: Unknown
Colours: Red, black on white, winged skull
Membership unknown
Voluntarily disbanded after being stripped
by Hells Angels-Kent

STAFFS EAGLES

Nothing known

SUSSEX HOGS

1977-1981
Location: Sussex
Assocs.: Mad Dogs-Sussex
Colours: Unknown

	Membership: Unknown
	Large club who voluntarily disbanded in 1981 after membership dwindled. Remaining members forming Grim Reapers-Sussex in 1982.
TRAMPS M.C.	1977-
	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Wiltshire
	Assocs.: Outcasts-Midlands, Wolf Outlaws-Cheltenham, Sixty-Nine-West Mids, Y Twrch Trwyth-Cymru, Desperados Outlaws-Forest of Dean, Hells Angels-West Coast
	Formerly: -
	Colours: Before 1984, red on white. Since 1984, blue on white
TROJANS-NORTH WEST	1977-1985
KENT	No. of chapters: 1
	Location: Gravesend, Kent
	Formerly: -
	Assocs.: Hells Angels-Kent
	Colours: Black on yellow, Trojan helmet
	Membership approx.: 10
	Voluntarily disbanded
VALLEY RODENTS	1977-1982
	No. of chapters: 2
	Location: Merthyr Tydfil, Brecon
	Formerly: -
	Assocs.: -
	Colours: Black on white rat
	Membership approx.: 30
	Disbanded by Y Brawdolaeth-Cymru and Berserkers-De Cymru

VIKING NOMADS

1980-

No..of chapters: 1

Location: Guildford, Surrey

Formerly: Hells Angels-Vikings

Assocs.: Vikings Fire

Colours: Red on white Viking

Membership: Unknown

Reformed as Viking Nomads following long
dispute with Hells Angels-Wessex

WARLORDS-GRAVESEND/
PLYMPTON

1982-

No. of chapters: 2

Location: Gravesend, Kent. Plympton, Devon.

Formerly: -

Assocs.: -

Colours: Skeletal rider on Union Jack back-
ground

Membership: Unknown

WILD WELSHMEN

197?-1975

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cardiff

Nothing more known.

Disbanded voluntarily after being stripped
by Hells Angels-Wessex

WOLF OUTLAWS-
CHELTENHAM

197?-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Cheltenham

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-West Coast, Desper-
ados Outlaws-Forest of Dean, Sixty-Nine-West
Mids, Outcasts-Midlands, Tramps M.C.

Y BRAWDOLAIETH-
CYMRU

Colours:

Membership approx.: 15

1980-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Neath, West Glamorgan

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Hells Angels-England, Berserkers-
De Cymru, Sixty-Nine-West Mids

Colours: Black, red and gold grim reaper
and wheel

Membership approx.: 6

New but well respected and much travelled
club. Hangaround club for Hells Angels-
Europe from 1982-1983, dropped out through
lack of members. Run in alliance with
Berserkers-De Cymru. Y Brawdolaieith is
Welsh for The Brotherhood

Y TWRCH TRWYTH-
CYMRU

1981-

No. of chapters: 1

Location: Dyfed

Formerly: -

Assocs.: Outcasts-Midlands, Sixty-Nine-West
Mids, Tramps M.C., Slaves-Coventry

Colours: Brown on white, boar's head

Membership approx.: 10

APPENDIX II

WORLDWIDE INDEX OF MOTORCYCLE CLUB NAMES

* The sharing of a common name, e.g. 'Chosen Few', in two or more countries is not necessarily an indication of any formal connection between those clubs. Except in exceptional circumstances, e.g. 'Hells Angels', it is much more likely that the clubs in question have appropriated common names by mere chance, or possibly by reputation.

A

A TOWN RIDERS	USA (black)
ABOLAFIA	USA
ACE OF CLUBS	GB
ACIF	GERM
ADLER	GERM
ADVENTURERS	GERM
AFRICAN BANDITS	USA (black)
AGUILAS	GERM
AHWILLAS	GERM
ALARSBERGA	SWED
ALBATROSS	GERM
ALFMANNEN	GERM
ALIENS	USA / USA (black)
ALLFY CATS	USA
ALLIGATORS	HOLL
ALONERS	GERM
AMBOSS	GERM
AMERICAN BREED	USA
AMERICAN EAGLES	USA (black)
AMERICAN SNAKES	GERM

A

AMERICAN TRAVELLERS	USA (black)
AMIGOS	USA / GERM
ANARCHISTS	GB
ANGEL NEGRI	GERM
ANGELIC HELLIONS	USA
ANGELIC HOST	GERM
ANGELS OF DEATH	GB
ANGELS OF HELL	SA
ANIMALS	USA
ANNA - GRETAS	SWED
ANTARCTIC ANGELS	USA
ANTARES	GERM
ANVILS	GERM
APOCALYPSE	USA
APOLLOS	USA
AQUILLA	GB
ARCHAFOPTERYX	GERM
ARIES	GERM
ARROWS	GERM
ARYAN BROTHERHOOD	USA
ASGARD	GERM
ASPHALT CLAN	GERM
ASSASSINS	USA
ATLANTIS	GERM
ATLANTIS BROTHERHOOD	GERM
AVENGERS	USA
AXEMEN	USA

B

BACK DOOR MEN	USA
BACHFLORES	USA
BACKGROUND	GERM

B

BAD COMPANY	GFRM
BAD FACE	GFRM
BAD HABIT	GFRM
BAD NEWS	CAN
BALLBUSTERS	USA (black)
BANDANA	USA
BANDIDOS	USA / AUS
BANDITS	USA
BANSHEES	USA
BARBARIANS	USA / GB
BARBARIAN GYPSYS	GB
BARHOPPERS	USA
BARONS	USA
BASTARDS	GB / GFRM
THE BATS	GFRM
B. C. ROADRIDERS	CAN
BEACH RIDERS	USA (black)
BEASTS OF PREY	GFRM
BEEFZEBUBS BOIL SUCKERS	GFRM
BEETLE BARONS	SA
BENGALAS BROTHERHOOD	USA
BIG THREE	USA (black)
BIKER FAMILY	GFRM
BIKING BLOCKHEADS	GFRM
BIRDS OF A FEATHER	USA
BISONS	GFRM
BERSERKERS	GB
BLACK ANGELS	USA (black) / GB / GFRM
BLACK BARONS	GFRM
BLACK BARRETS	GFRM
BLACK BATS	GFRM

B

BLACK BITCHES	USA (women)
BLACK CATS	USA (black) / GERM
BLACK COAT	AUS
BLACK COBRAS	GERM
BLACK COWLS	GERM
BLACK CREED	GERM
BLACK DEVILS	GERM
BLACK DIAMONDS	GERM
BLACK DRAGONS	USA / USA (black)
BLACK FALCONS	USA (black)
BLACK FAMILY	GERM
BLACK FUTURES	GERM
BLACK HARLEY	HOLL
BLACK HAWKS	USA
BLACK HURRICANES	GERM
BLACK JACKETS	GERM
BLACK KINGS	GERM
BLACK KNIGHTS	USA / GERM
BLACK KONTOR	GERM
BLACK LEATHER	GERM
BLACK PANTHERS	USA
BLACK POWER	NZ (Maori)
BLACK QUEEN	GERM
BLACK RIFERS	GERM
BLACK ROSE	USA (black)
BLACK SHADOWS	GERM
BLACK SHEEP	USA
BLACK SOULS	GERM
BLACK SPIDERS	USA (black)
BLACK SPIRITS	GERM
BLACK SQUAD	GERM

B

BLACK STELL	GERM
BLACK THUNDERBIRDS	GERM
BLACK UHLANS	AUS
BLACK VAMP RIDERS	GERM
BLACK VENOM	GERM
BLACK WHORES	GERM
BLACK WIDOWS	GERM
BLACK WINGS	GERM
BLIZZARD	GERM
BLOCKHEADS	GERM
BLOODY ANGELS	USA
BLOODY BROTHERS	GERM
BLOODY DARKNESS	GERM
BLOODY HAWKS	GERM
BLOODY RIDERS	GERM
BLUE ANGELS	GB / GERM
BLUE BIRD RIDERS	USA
BLUE KNIGHTS	USA / CAN
BLUE RUMS	USA
BOHEMIAN MONGERS C. D. R.	USA
BOOZE FIGHTERS	USA
BOLD ONES	USA (black)
BOMBHOLDERS	GERM
BONES	GERM
BORDER RIDERS	USA
BORN FREE	GERM
BORN LOSERS	USA
BORN TO BE WILD	GERM
BORROWED TIME	USA
BRANDED	USA / GERM
BREED	USA

B

BREEDS	SA (mixed race)
BRETFHEREN	USA
B. R. O.	GERM
BRO RIDERS	GERM
BROKE BROTHERS	USA
BRONCOS	GERM
BROS	USA
BROTHER SPEED	GERM
BROTHERHOOD	USA
BROTHERHOOD OF BIKERS	USA
THE BROTHERS	USA / GB
BROTHERS OF THE HORIZON	USA (black)
BROTHERS OF SATAN	USA
BROTHERS OF THE THIRD WHEEL	USA
BROTHERS OF THE WHEEL	USA
BROTHERS SPEED	USA
BOUNTY HUNTERS	CAN
BUFFALO RIDERS	USA (black)
BUKANFFERS	GERM
BUFFEL	GERM
BULL CITY RIDERS	USA (black)
BULLSHIT	DN
BURGFALKEN	GERM
BURNING SKULLS	GERM
BURNING WHEELS	GERM
BUSHMEN	USA

C

THE CANCER	GERM
CARDINAL 74	USA (black)
CARETAKERS	USA
CAROBINA	SWED

CAROLINA DRIFTERS	USA (black)
CAROLINA RAIDERS	USA
CAVELIERS	USA
CAVE MEN	GFRM
C. B. I.	GFRM
C. C. RIDERS	SA
CENTAUREN	GFRM
CHAIN AND BOUND	USA (black)
CHAINDOG	GFRM
CHALLENGERS	GFRM
CHAOS RIDERS	GFRM
CHARIOTS	GFRM
CHARTER OAKS	USA
CHF	GFRM
CHIEFSFF	GFRM
CHILDREN OF PEACE	USA (black)
CHING-A-LINGS	USA
CHOPPERS	USA / GFRM / SWED
CHOSEN BREED	USA
CHOSEN FEW	USA / USA (black) / CAN / GB / GFRM / SWITZ / FR
CHOSEN ONES	USA
CIMBRI	USA
CIRCLE OF FRIENDS	GFRM
CLAN	GFRM
CLEAR LAKE	USA
CLOVEN HOOPS	USA
CLUB 20	GFRM
CLUB DEEROES	AUS
COACHMEN	USA
COBRAS	USA (black) / GFRM / AUST

C

COFFIN CHEATERS	USA / CAN / AUS
COMETS	USA
COMMANCHEROS	USA / AUS
COMMANCHES	GB
COMPADRES	USA
CONDOR	GERM
CONFEDERATE ANGELS	USA
CONFEDERATES	GERM
CONFECTION	GERM
CONQUISTADORS	USA
CORUI CORACFS	SWED
COSMIC STAR RIDERS	USA
COSSACKS	USA
COVEN	USA
COWL BEARERS	GERM
CRAN	GERM
CRAY FISH	GERM
CRAZY BISHOPS	USA
CRAZY BUNCH	GERM
CRAZY DOGS	GERM
CRAZY DRIVERS	GERM
CRAZY HEAP	GERM
CRAZY HOMICIDES	USA / GERM
CRAZY HOMICIDE SISTERS	USA (women)
CRAZY HORSE II	GB
CRAZY SHADOWS	GERM
CRAZY VULTURES	GERM
CRITTERS	AUS
CROSS BREEDS	USA
CROSS SPIDERS	GERM
CROSSMEN	USA

C

CRUEL ANGELS	GFRM
CRUISERS	USA
CRUSADERS	USA
CULT	USA
CUSTODES	GFRM
CUSTOM RIDERS	USA
CYCLE BUMS	USA
CYCLE KINGS	USA (black)
CYCLE SINDICATE	USA
CYCLE TRAMPS	GB
CYCLE QUEENS	USA
CYCLONES	SA
CYCLOPS	GFRM

D

DAKES	GFRM
DAKOTA RIDERS	USA
DALTONS	NZ / SWED
DAMNED	USA / GFRM
DANGER FREAKS	GFRM
DARE DEVILS	USA
DARK AGES	GFRM
DARK CREATIONS	GFRM
DARK FACES	GFRM
DARK LIONS	GFRM
DARK HORSE	GB
DARK HORSES	GFRM
DARK SHADOWS	GFRM
D. C. EAGLES	USA
DEAD ANGELS	GFRM
DEAD FLOWERS	GFRM
DEAD MEN	USA

D

DEAD RINGERS	GERM
DEADLY EAGLES	GERM
DEATH DEALERS	GERM
DEATH NOMADS	USA
DEATH PANTHERS	GERM
DEATHS DISCIPLES	CAN
DECAUVILLE	SWED
DEEP SOUTH CHOPPERS	USA
DEFENDERS	USA
DEFIANT ONES	USA
DEFIANTS	USA
DEFIERS	USA
DEISLER	GERM
DELIVIER	GERM
DEL RIOS	NZ
DEMON RIDERS	GERM
DEMONS	USA
DERELICTS	AUS
DESERT RATS	AUS
DESPERADOES	USA / GERM
DESPERADOS OUTLAWS	GB
DESTROYERS	GERM / AUST
DEVIL COBRAS	GERM
DEVIL COMPANY	GERM
DEVIL DRIVERS	GERM
DEVIL TRUCKS	GERM
DEVIL DUKES	GERM
DEVIL RIDERS	GB
DEVIL SNAKES	GERM
DEVIL SOLDIERS	GERM
DEVIL WINGS	GERM

D

DEVIL WIZARD	GERM
DEVILS	GERM
DEVILS ADVOCATES	USA
DEVILS BREED	HAW
DEVIL'S COMPANY	GERM
DEVILS CROSS	GERM
DEVILS DISCIPLES	USA / CAN / GERM
DEVIL'S DRAGON	GERM
DEVILS ENVOYS	GERM
DEVIL'S EYE	GERM
DEVILS FLAME	GERM
DEVIL'S GUARD	GERM
DEVILS HENCHMEN	USA / AUS / NZ / GB
DEVIL'S HORSE	GERM
DEVILS OUTLAWS	AUS
DEVILS PRIDE	USA / LUX
DEVILS SERVANTS	GERM
DEVILS SHOTS	USA
DEVILS SNAKES	GERM
DEVILS ON WHEELS	GERM
DIABLOS	USA / GB
DIACK DIAMONDS	GERM
DIAMOND BACKS	USA
DIAMOND REBELS	GERM
DIANA	GERM
DIRT AND GRIME	USA
DIRT HOGS	USA
DIRTY ANGELS	GERM
DIRTY DEVILS	GERM
DIRTY DOZEN	USA / GERM
DIRTY OLD MEN	USA

D

DIXIE DRAGONS	USA
DOG SOLDIERS	GERM
DOGTOWN	USA
DRAGGIN' GYPSIES	USA
DRAGON CREW	USA
DRAGON RIDERS	USA
DRAGONS	USA / USA (women) / GB / SWED
DRAGOONS	USA / GERM / FR
DRIFTERS	USA / GB
DRUIDS	GB
DRIVERS	GERM
DYIN BREED	USA

E

EAGLE	GERM
EAGLE RIDERS	SWED
EAGLES	USA / GB / SWED
EAGLES HIGHLAND	GERM
EARLS	GERM
EARLS OF HELL	GERM
FAST BAY DRAGONS	USA (black)
FASTSIDE	USA
EASY RIDERS	USA (black)
EGYPTIANS	USA (black)
FISWAFFEN	GERM
EL CONQUATCHEROS	CAN
EL DIABLOS	USA
EL FORRASTEROS	USA
ELEGANT DISCIPLES	USA (black)
ELIMINATORS	USA
ELITE	USA
ELWEYDAS	GERM

F

THE EMPTIES	USA
THE END	UK
ENFORCERS	USA
EPITAPH RIDERS	NZ
FRI DEZ FIGHTERS	GFRM
ERROR	GFRM
ESKIL	SWED
ETERNAL HOGS	GFRM
EVANGELISTS	USA
EXCALIBUR	GFRM
EXECUTIONERS	USA
EXECUTORS	GFRM
EXHAUST RIDERS	GFRM
EXIIUM	GFRM
EXILES	USA
EXITUS	GFRM
EYE OF RA	USA

F

F- TROOP	USA
FAINT ANGELS	GFRM
FALCONS	USA
FALKENSTEIN	GFRM
FALLEN ANGELS	GFRM
FAMILY	GB
FANTASTICS	GFRM
FAST COMPANY	USA
FAST DRAGONS	GFRM
FAST EAGLES	HOLL
FAST SWORDS	GFRM
FAST WORDS	GFRM
FFELLOWS	GFRM / SWED

F

PFUEERDISTEL	GERM
FIFTH CHAPTER	USA
FIFTH COLUMN	GERM
FIFTH HORSEMAN OF OUR APOCALYPSE	SA
FILTHY FEW	GB
FINEST	GERM
FIRE BIRDS	GERM
FIRE DRAGONS	GERM
FIRE SHADOWS	GERM
FIRE STONES	GERM
FIRE WHEELS	GERM
FLAME EYES	GERM
FLAMES	USA
FLEDERMAUS	GERM
FLYING ANIMALS	GERM
FLYING BROTHERS	SA
FLYING CORPSE	GERM
FLYING DEATH	GERM
FLYING FISTS	GERM
FLYING LANCE	GERM
FLYING MOTORS	GERM
FLYING REPTILES	USA
FLYING SKULLS	USA
FLYING WHEELS	USA
FOOTHOLDERS	GERM
FORBIDDEN WHEELS	USA
FOREIGNERS	SA
FORGOTTEN BASTARDS	AUS
FORGOTTEN FEW	USA
FORGOTTEN ONES	USA
FORSAKEN FEW	USA
FOUR OWNERS	AUS

F

FOURTH REICH	USA / AUS
FRANTIC DEMONS	GERM
FREAKS	USA / GERM
FREAK CONNECTION	GERM
FREE BATS	GERM
FREE BIKERS	GERM
FREE BIRD	GERM
FREE BORDERS	USA
FREE DEVILS	GERM
FREE EAGLES	GERM
FREE FIGHTERS	GERM
FREE HARLEYS	SWED
FREE LIONS	GERM
FREE LIVIN'	GERM
FREE MEN	GERM
FREE RIDERS	USA
FREE SOULS	USA
FREE SPIRITS	GB
FREE STYLES	USA
FREETOM RIDERS	USA / GERM / SA
FREELANCERS	USA
FREEWAY RIDERS	GERM
FREEWHEELERS	USA
FREEWHEELING WESSEX	GB
FREI CORPS	GERM
FRIENDS OF HELL	GERM
FRIENDS OF THE ROAD	USA
FREJA FREAKS	SWED
FUGAZI TRIBE	USA
FUGUEFROS	USA
FULTON STREET FUCKUPS	USA

G

GALLIER	GFRM
GALLOPING GOOSE	USA / CAN / DEN
GALLOWS BIRDS	GFRM
GATE TO PASSIONS	GFRM
GAYLORDS	USA
GENESIS	GFRM
GEORGIA BAD BOYS	USA (black)
GHETTO BOYS	GFRM
GHETTO RIDERS	USA
GHOST ANGELS	GFRM
GHOST ARROWS	GFRM
GHOST CAPTAINS	GFRM
GHOST CREW	GFRM
GHOST GUARD	GFRM
GHOST POLICE	GFRM
GHOST RIDERS	USA / AUS / GFRM / HOLL
GHOST SQUAD	GFRM
GHOSTS OF DEVIL	GFRM
GHOSTS ON WHEELS	GFRM
GIPSY ROVERS	AUS
GIPSY WARLORDS	GB
GITANOS	GFRM
GITANS	CAN
GLADIATORS	USA / GFRM
GJUTTJARN	SWED
GLOBETROTTERS	GFRM
GLOOMRIDERS	GFRM
GOD SQUAD	AUS
GODS CHILDREN	USA / USA (black)
GODS GARBAGE	AUS
GOLDEN CROWNS	USA (black)

G

GOLDEN DRAKES	GFRM
GOLDEN FALCONS	USA
GOLDEN GOOSE	USA
GOLDEN HAWK RIDERS	CAN
GOLDS	GFRM
GORGONS	AUS
GOURMET RIDERS	USA
GRATEFUL DEAD	USA / GB
GRAVE DIGGERS	USA / GB / GFRM
GREEN BERETS	GFRM
GREEN KNIGHTS	GFRM
GRFISCHER GANG	GFRM
GREMIUM	GFRM
GREMLINS	GFRM / FR
GREY GHOSTS	USA
GRIM REAPERS	USA / CAN / GB / NZ
GUARDIANS	USA
GYPSIES	USA
GYPSY	GFRM
GYPSY BARONS	USA
GYPSY JOKERS	USA / GB / AUS / GFRM
GYPSY OUTLAWS	USA
GYPSY WHEELERS	CAN
GYPSYS	USA

H

H & H	USA (black)
HALFBREEDS	USA
HANGMEN	USA / GB / GFRM
HARD CORE	GFRM
HARLEQUINS	GFRM
HARPEDO KRABS	SWED

H

HARTCAU	GERM
HAWG BROTHERS	USA
HAWKSMOON	GB
HEAD HUNTERS	USA / GB / GERM / NZ
HEART OF OAK	GERM
HEATHENS	USA
HEAVEN DRIVERS	GERM
HEAVEN FRIENDS	GERM
HEAVENS ANGELS	SA
HEAVENS DEVILS	USA
HEAVEN'S OWN	GERM
HEAVENS SINNERS	USA
HEAVY HORSES	GERM
HEINGE BULLS	SWED
HELL FIRE CLUB	GB
HELL DRAGONS	GERM
HELL DRIVERS	GERM
HELL ON WHEELS	GERM
HELL RIDERS	GERM
HELL SEEKERS	USA
HELL SNAKES	GERM
HELL STOMPERS	USA
HELLBIRD	GERM
HELLISH CREW	GERM
HELLS ANGELS	USA / CAN / GB / AUS / NZ
	GERM / SWITZ / AUST / FR
	HOLL / DEN / BRAZ / IRL / SA
HELLS CHOSEN FEW	USA
HELL'S EAGLES	GERM
HELLS HENCHMEN	GB
HELLS KIND	GERM

H

HELL'S OUR HOME	USA
HELL'S RAIDERS	GFRM
HELLS SERVANTS	USA / GFRM
HELLS UNION	USA
HELLS WHEELS	USA
HELLS WRATH	USA
HELVETS	SWITZ
HENCHMEN	USA / CAN
HI-WAY CRUISERS	USA (black)
HIGH RIDERS	USA
HIGHWAY 61	NZ
HIGHWAY DRIVERS	GFRM
HIGHWAY EAGLES	GFRM
HIGHWAY LIONS	GFRM
HIGHWAY NOMADS	GFRM
HIGHWAY PROWLERS	USA
HIGHWAY RIDERS	GFRM
HIGHWAY SWANS	GFRM
HIGHWAY THUNDER	GFRM
HIGHWAYMEN	CAN / AUS
HINKELS	BELG
HOG RIDERS	USA
HOGS	GB / SWED
HOLLENJOCKEY	GFRM
HOLOCAUST	CAN
HONDIX	CAN
HONESTUS GERMANIUS	GFRM
HOOLIGANS	GFRM
HORSE POWER	GFRM
HOS STOMPERS	SWED
HOT WHEELS	GFRM

H

HUBERTUS	GERM
HUNS	USA
THE HUNTERS	GERM
HURRICANES	GERM / SWED
HYCRANS	GERM
HYDET	SWED
HYRADOS	GERM

I

IMMORTALS	USA / USA (women)
INCEPTORS	GERM
INDEPENDENCE	GERM
INDEPENDENTS	GERM
INFERNAL CREW	GERM
INFERNAL MACHINES	GERM
INNOCENT SINNERS	USA
INNOCENTS	GERM
INVADERS	USA
IRON AXE MEN	USA
IRON BIKERS	GERM
IRON BRAINS	GERM
IRON CHAIN	GERM
IRON COBRAS	USA
IRON COFFINS	USA
IRON CROSS	GERM
IRON CROSSES	USA
IRON CROSSMEN	USA
IRON DRAKES	GERM
IRON FIGHTERS	GERM
IRON GUARD	GERM
IRON HAWGS	CAN / SWED
IRON HEADS	GERM

I

IRON HORSE	USA
IRON HORSES	USA
IRON HORSEMEN	USA / CAN / GB
IRON WARRIORS	USA
IRON WHEELS	USA / GERM
IRON WINGS	USA
ISLANDERS	USA / CIS

J

JACKALS	USA
JAMMERS	USA
JAYHAWKERS	USA
JENNIFER	GERM
JERSEY DEVILS	USA
JERSEY GYPSIES	USA
JESTERS	USA
JETS	GERM
JOKERS	USA / GB
JOSSGRUND	GERM
JOURNEYMEN	USA
JOY RIDERS	USA (black)
JUNKMEN	USA
JUST RIDERS	GERM

K

KADUNAS	GERM
KOBRAS	GERM
KAISER BOYS	NZ
KAMIKAZE	BFLG
KARAYA	GERM
KATANAS	GERM
KENTUCKIANA GUNSLINGERS	USA (black)

K

KENTUCKY HIGHWAYMEN	USA
KETTENHUNDE	GERM
THE KILLERS	GERM
KING COBRA	GERM
KING COBRAS	NZ
KING TIGERS	GERM
KINGS CREW	CAN
KINGS OF THE ROAD	GERM
KLANSMEN	USA
KLOSTERKURVE	GERM
KNIGHTS	USA
KNIGHTS OF THE ROAD	USA
KNIGHT RIDERS	USA
KOBRAS	GERM

L

LACARDA	GERM
LACOMA	CAN
LADIE SECT	GERM
LAHSTEDT	GERM
LANCERS	GERM
LANDPLAGE	GERM
LANDSNECHT	GERM
LAOKONS	GERM
LAS AGUILLAS	USA
LAST BROTHERS	GERM
LAST CHAPTER	USA
LAST FREE RIDERS	GERM
LAST HEROES	GB
LAUNDERIN' DEVILS	USA
LAWBREAKERS	GERM
LAWMEN	USA

L

LE FREAK	GFRM
LEGION	GFRM
LES COPAINS	LUX
LES DURS	GFRM
LES MORFALS	FR
LESCHETZ	LUX
LEVIATHAN	GFRM
LIBERTY	GFRM
LIBERTY SONS	GFRM
LIBERTY WHEELS	GFRM
LIBRA	SA (women)
LIGHTNING	GFRM
LIONS	GFRM
LIVING DEAD	GB / GFRM
LIVING DEATH	GFRM
LIVING FREE	GFRM
LIVING WRECKS	GFRM
LOBOS	USA / CAN / GFRM
LOGANA	CAN
LONE WOLF	GFRM
LONE WOLVES	AUS
LONELY RIDERS	GFRM
LONERS	USA
LONESOME RIDERS	GFRM
LOOSER	GFRM
LORTS	GFRM
LORDS OF THE ROAD	USA
LOS BRAVOS	CAN
LOS BRUJOS	GFRM
LOS LOBOS	USA
LOS VAGABUNDOS	USA
LOSERS	GFRM

L

LOST BREED	NZ
LOST BROTHERS	GFRM
LOST SONS	GFRM
LOST SOULS	USA / GB
LOYAL	USA
LUCIFERS	GFRM
LUCIFERS CREW	GFRM
LUCIFER'S DRAGON	GFRM
LUCIFERS FRIENDS	GFRM
LUCIFERS LEGION	USA
LUCIFER'S MESSENGERS	GFRM
LUCIFERS OUTLAWS	GB
LUCIFERS PRIESTS	GFRM
LUCIFERS SACRIFICE	GFRM

M

MACABROS	GFRM
MAD CHAPS	GFRM
MAD DIGGERS	GFRM
MAD DOGS	GB / AUS
MADCAPS	GB
MADHATTERS	GB
MADNESS LIONS	GFRM
MADNESS	USA
MAFFISH WHEELS	GFRM
MAGOG	USA / NZ
MAJESTICS	GFRM
MARAUDERS	USA
MARKET STREET COMMANDOS	USA
MARKTREDWITZ	GFRM
MATADORS	USA
MATES OF THE ROAD	GFRM

M

MAVERICKS	USA
MAU MAU GIRLS	USA (women)
M. C. W.	GFRM
MENDES	GB
MEPHISTO	GFRM
MERCILESS	GFRM
MERCILESS RIDERS	USA
MERRY PRANKSTERS	GB
MESCALEROS	USA / GFRM
MET-BRUDER	GFRM
MIDNIGHT ANGELS	GFRM
MIDNIGHT RIDERS	USA
MIDWEST DRIFTERS	USA
MILWAUKEE IRON	USA
MIND BENDERS	USA
MINDERS VLOTA	GFRM
MINORITY	CAN
MINOTAURS	GFRM
MISFITS	USA
MISSILES	CAN
MIXED BLOOD	USA
MOBSHITTERS	AUS
MOFOS	USA / GB
MOLOCHS	CAN
MONGOLS	USA / USA (black)
MONGREL MOB	NZ (Maori)
MONGRELS	NZ
MONTRESORE	GFRM
MOON DOGS	USA (black)
MOONSTONE	GFRM
MORITURI	GFRM
MOT CLUB	GFRM

M

MOTHERS	SWED
MOTHERS FREAK	SWED
MOTLEY CREW	USA
MOTO CLAN	GERM
MOTO PRIESTS	GERM
MOTODROM	GERM
MOTORRAD	GERM
MOTORRADFREUNDE	GERM
MOTORING STARS	USA (black)
MUDDY TRIBE	GERM
MYSTERYS	GERM
MYSTIC KNIGHTS	USA (black)

N

NAKED MEN	USA
NAMELESS	GERM
NAPTOWN RIDERS	USA (black)
NATIONAL	GERM
NASIKS OF UNITY	USA (black)
NAUTHNOTZER	GERM
NAVAHOS	GERM
NAZARETH	GERM
NECROMANCERS	GERM
NEVER MORE	USA
NEW BRAVOS	CAN
NIGHT COMMANDERS	USA
NIGHT CREEPERS	GERM
NIGHT EAGLES	GERM
NIGHT GUARD	USA
NIGHT HAWKS	GERM
NIGHT RIDERS	USA / CAN / SWED
NIGHT SINNERS	USA

N

NIGHTFALL	GERM
NIGHTRIDERS	USA (black) / GERM
NINTH LIFE	GB
NO MERCYS	GERM
NOBODY	GERM
NOMAD GIRLS	USA (women)
NOMADS	USA / GB / AUS / GERM / SA
NORMANNEN	GERM
NORSEMEN	GB / AUS
NORTHEAST RIDERS	USA
NORTHERN RIDERS	USA
NORTHMEN	USA
NORTHWEST NOMADS	USA
NORTHWIND RIDERS	USA
NOVALIS	GERM
NUGGETS	USA
NUTTY BOYS	GERM

O

THE ODINS	GERM
ODIN'S SONS	USA
ODIN'S WRATH	CAN
OFFENDERS	USA
OLD CASTLE	GERM
OLD GERMANS	GERM
OLD IRON	USA
OLD LOUIS	GERM
OMEN	GERM
ONE-EYED JACKS	USA
ONLY THEE LONELY	USA
OPPETABAKKEN	NOR
ORGAN PLUNGERS	USA

O

OSTERFELD	GFRM
OUR BLOOD	USA
OUTCASTS	USA / CAN / GB / AUS
OUTLAW NOMADS	GB
OUTLAWS	USA / CAN / GB / AUS / GFRM
	IT / BELG
OUTRIDERS	USA
OUTSIDERS	USA / GFRM
OVER THE HILL GANG	USA

P

PACIFIC REBELS	CAN
PACK PANTHERS	USA
PACK RATS	SWED
PAGAN SONS	GB
PAGANS	USA / GB / AUS
PAISANOS	USA
PAKRATS	USA
PALL BEARERS	USA
PALMETTO DRIFTERS	USA (black)
PANIC FAMILY	GFRM
PAPASONS	USA
PARA-DICE RIDERS	CAN
PARIAH	GB
PARK	GFRM
PATHFINDERS	GFRM
PEGASUS	GFRM
PEKING FELLOWS	SWED
PERPETRATORS	USA
PHAROHS	AUS
PHILISTER	GFRM
PHILLA CORSAIRS	USA

P

PHOENIX	GFRM
PIGS OF DEVIL	GFRM
PIGS OF VERRIL	GFRM
PINK PANTHERS	GFRM
PINKS	AUS
PLAYBOYS	CAN
PLFUELS	GFRM
P.O.B.O.B.S.	USA
POISON	USA (black)
POOR WHITE TRASH	USA
POPFYE	CAN
POPFYES	USA
PORT CITY WHEELERS	USA (black)
POWER WHEELS	GFRM
FRANKSTERS	USA
PRFACHERS PRIDE	CAN
PRESIDENTS	USA
PRIDE OF LIONS	USA
THE PRISONERS	USA
PROPHETS	USA
PROUD RIDERS	USA
PUMAS	GFRM
PULLMAN HACKERS	USA
PUSHERS	GFRM

Q

QUEENSMEN	CAN
QUI SORDES	GFRM
QUO VADIS	GFRM

R

RABBITS	GFRM
RACING DEATH	GFRM

R

RACING TURTLES	GFRM
THE RADGE FARE RIDERS	GFRM
RAGE OF DEVIL	GFRM
RAIDERS	USA
RAIDING FRIENDS	GFRM
RAINBOW RIDERS	GFRM
RANGERS	USA / GFRM
RARE BREED	USA
RAT PACK	USA
RAT PATROL	USA (black)
RATS	USA
THE RATS	USA / GFRM
RATS OF BONETOWN	GFRM
RATTLERS	USA / USA (black) / GB
RAUMLE	GFRM
RAVEN JAMS	USA
RAVENS	USA
RAW POWER	GFRM
REAPERS	USA / GB
REAPERS HARVEST	GFRM
REBEL BREED	USA
REBEL KNIGHTS	GFRM
REBEL ROUSERS	USA
REBELS	USA / CAN / AUS
REBEL'S DISCIPLES	USA
REBUT GRONE	GFRM
RED BARONS	GFRM
RED CLIFFS	GFRM
RED DEVILS	USA / USA (black) / CAN / HOLL
RED EAGLES	GFRM
RED KNIGHTS	USA

R

RED ROSNERS	GFRM
RED SLAUGHTERERS	GFRM
RED SUN RIDERS	GFRM
REGENTS	USA
REJECTS	USA / GFRM
RELAXER	GFRM
RENEGADE BREED	USA / GB / AUS / DEN
RENEGADE NOMADS	USA
RENEGADES	USA / CAN / GB
RESTLESS BREED	USA
RESURRECTED	AUS
RESURRECTION	USA
REVENGING BREEDS	USA
RHINE	GFRM
R. I. P.	USA
RIDE OR DIE	GFRM
RIDERS	GFRM
RIDING BULLS	GFRM
RIDGE RUNNERS	USA
RIFFS	GFRM
RIGHT FOOT SHIFT	GB
RIGHTFOUS ONES	USA
RIGHTFOUS WHEELERS	USA
THE RIPPERS	GFRM
RISING SONS	USA
RISING SUN	SA
RISING WHEELS	GFRM
ROAD	USA
ROAD AGENTS	USA
ROAD ANGELS	GFRM
ROAD ARMY	GFRM
ROAD ARROWS	GFRM

R

ROAD BREAKERS	GFRM
ROAD CREW	GFRM
ROAD EAGLES	GFRM
ROAD GANG	GFRM
ROAD GYPSIES	HAW
ROAD HAWKS	USA / GFRM / HOLL
ROAD HOGS	GB
ROAD HUGGERS	USA (black)
ROAD HUNS	USA
ROAD JESTERS	USA
ROAD KNIGHTS	USA (black) / AUS
ROAD PACK	GFRM
ROAD RATS	USA / GB / GFRM
ROAD REBELS	GB
ROAD REGENTS	USA
ROAD RIDERS	GFRM
ROAD RUNNERS	USA / USA (black) / GFRM
ROAD SAINTS	USA
ROAD SNAKES	USA
ROAD SPIRITS	GFRM
ROAD STOMPERS	USA
ROAD TRAMPS	USA
ROAD VIKINGS	USA
ROAD VIPERS	GFRM
ROAD WINGS	GFRM
ROADMASTER	BELG
ROADMASTERS	GFRM
ROCKET CITY RIDERS	USA (black)
ROGUES	USA / GB
ROLLING STARS	USA (black)
ROMAN KINGS	USA

R

ROMAN QUEENS	USA (women)
RONDOS	GFRM
ROSENBURG	GFRM
ROUGH LIBERTY	GFRM
ROUGH RIDERS	USA / USA (black)
ROUNDERS	USA
ROYAL KNIGHTS	USA (black)
ROYALTIES	USA
RUBBER DUCKS	GFRM
RUEF BROTHERS	USA
RYDERS	USA (black)

S

SADDLE MASTERS	USA
SADDLE TRAMPS	USA
SAINTS	USA / NZ / GFRM
SAINTS AND SINNERS	USA
SAINT ANGELS	GFRM
SAITON CHOICE	GFRM
SAMURAI	GFRM
SANDMAN	USA
SANDMAN LADIES	USA (women)
SANDRINGHAM ROAD ANGELS	NZ
SANTA MARIA SADDLELITES	USA
SANTFE	GFRM
SARACENS	USA
SARMATES	FR
SATAN ADLER	GFRM
SATAN BISHOPS	USA
SATAN BROTHERS	GFRM
SATAN WHEELS	USA
SATANS ANGELS	CAN
SATANS BREED	GB

S

SATANS CAVALRY	AUS
SATANS CHILDREN	USA
SATANS CHOICE	USA / CAN / AUS
SATANS COMMANDOS	AUS
SATANS DESIRES	USA
SATANS FEW	USA
SATANS OUTLAWS	USA
SATANS OWN	GERM
SATANS RAIDERS	USA
SATANS RIDERS	AUS
SATANS SERVANTS	USA
SATAN'S SKULLS	GERM
SATANS SIDEKICKS	USA
SATANS SIDEWINDERS	USA
SATANS SINNERS	USA / CAN
SATANS SLAVES	USA / GB / NZ
SATANS SOLDIERS	USA
SATANS TRAMPS	USA
SATANS WALHALLA	GERM
SATISFACTIONS	GERM
SATYRS	USA
SAULT RIDERS	USA
SAVAGE NOMADS	USA
SAVAGE SKULLS	USA
SAVAGES	USA
SAXON OUTLAWS	GB
SAXONS	AUS
SCALPHUNTERS	NZ
SCARLET SISTERS	USA (women)
SCHLEUSSE III	GERM
SCHRAT	GERM
SCHWADRONEN	USA

SCORPIO	USA / GB
SCORPIONS	USA / GERM
SCOUTS	GERM
SCREAMING EAGLES	USA / USA (black)
SCREAMING PACHYDERMS	USA
SCRIS PRINT	GERM
SCUM	GERM
SEARCHER IIs	USA
SEAWAY RAIDERS	USA
SECOND CITY	USA
SEEKERS	USA
SERPENTS	GERM / BELG
SCYTHE MAN	GERM
SHADES OF DEVIL	GERM
SHADOW ANGELS	GERM
SHADOW LIONS	GERM
SHADOWY CLAWS	GERM
SHAKERS	USA
SHAOLIN	GERM
SHARKS	GERM
SIDEWINDERS	USA / GB
SILVER DOLLARS	USA (black)
SIN CITY DISCIPLES	USA
SINNERS SERVANTS	GERM
SINTFIELD REITER	GERM
SISTER'S FINEST	GERM
SIX PACK	GERM
SIXTY-NINE	GB
SKULLMUNCHERS	USA
SKULLS	GERM
SKY RIDERS	GERM

S

SKYWAY RIDERS	USA
SLAVES	GB
SLOWRIDERS	SWED
SLUMLORDS	USA
SOLDNER	GFRM
SONS OF CRYPT	USA
SONS OF DESTROYER	GFRM
SONS OF THE DEVIL	USA
SONS OF THE EAGLE	GFRM
SONS OF HELL	USA / GB
SONS OF ODIN	USA / GFRM
SONS OF RACY	GFRM
SONS OF THE ROAD	GFRM
SONS OF SATAN	USA / GB
SONS OF SILENCE	USA
SONS OF WITCHES	USA
SORCERERS	USA
SOUL BROTHERS	USA
SOUL PATROL	USA (black)
SOUL UNITED	USA (black)
SOUTHERN BIKERS	GFRM
SOUTHERN BATTLEERS	USA
SOUTHERN RIDERS	USA
SOUTHERN STAR	USA
SOWETO HAWKS	SA (black)
SPARTANS	CAN
SPEEDERS	GFRM
SPEED LIONS	GFRM
SPEEDY'S	BELG
SPESSART	GFRM
SPHINX	GFRM

SPIDERS	GERM
SPINNE	GERM
SPIRIT	GERM
SPOILERS	USA
STAMPERS	GERM
STANDER GREIF	GERM
STATE BURNERS	USA
STATES CYCLE CLUB	USA
STEADY POPPERS	USA (black)
STEAMERS	GERM
STEEL AND WHEELS	GERM
STEEL BROTHERS	GERM
STEPCHILDREN	SA (mixed race)
STEPPENWOLF	GERM
STFUZER	GERM
STOMPERS	USA
STONERS	USA
STONECOLD	USA
STORKS	GERM
STORM RIDERS	USA / AUS / GERM
STORMBRINGER	GERM
STORMTROOPERS	USA / AUS / NZ
STRAIGHT SATANS	USA
STRAY SATANS	USA
STREET ANGELS	GERM
STREET BIRDS	GERM
STREET RIDERS	USA
STREET SHARKS	GERM
STROKERS	USA
STRONG ARM OF THE LAW	GERM
STURGIS	GERM

S

STURMVOGEL	GFRM
SULTANS	SA
SUN RIDERS	GFRM
SUNDOWNERS	USA / GFRM
SUNS OF DARKNESS	USA (black)
SUNSET KINGS	GFRM
SUPER RIDERS	USA (black)
SUPERBAD	USA (black)
SURVIVORS	USA
SYMPATHY FOR THE DEVIL	GFRM
SYNDICATE	USA

T

TAU ANKIA	GFRM
TEAM GERMANY	GFRM
TEMPLERS	GFRM
TENNESSEES	GFRM
TERANIGRA	GFRM
TEUFEL'S WEHRMACHT	AUST
TEUTONEN	GFRM
THROTTLE TWISTERS	USA
THUNDER GOD	GFRM
THUNDER WINGS	GFRM
THUNDERBIRDS	USA / GFRM / AUST
THUNDERBOLTS	GFRM
THUNDERGUARDS	USA (black)
TIGERS	NZ
TIN PONY	USA
T. N. T.	USA
TONGS	USA
TOPPERS	USA
TOROS	GFRM

T

TRAMPS	USA / GB / SWED
TRAMPERS	USA
TRAVELLERS	USA / GERM
TRI EVIL	USA
TRI-STATERS	USA
TRIBE	USA
TRIBES	USA
TRIBESMEN	USA / CAN
TRIBULATORS	USA
TRIUMVIRATE	GERM
TROJANS	GB / GERM
TROOPERS	GERM
TROYANS	GERM
THE TRUCKERS	GERM
TRUST	GERM
TURNING WHEELS	USA (black)
TWIN CLUB	SWED
TWISTED SISTERS	USA (women)
TYRANTS	GERM

U

UGLY MOTHERS	USA
UNCOMMON GHOST	GERM
UNDEFTAKERS	USA
UNFORGIVEN FATE	GERM
UNKNOWN RIDERS	GERM
UNKNOWNNS	USA
UNICORNS	GERM
UNITED	SWED
UNITED BIKERS	GB
UNITED BROTHERS	GERM
UNITED EAGLES	GERM

U

UNITED WHEELS	GFRM
UNITY OF ROCKERS	GB
UNTOUCHABLES	USA (black)
U. S. RIDERS	USA
U. S. S. ENTERPRISE	USA

V

VAGABONDS	USA / CAN / DEN
VAGOS	USA / MEX
VAGRANTS	USA
VAMPIRES	GFRM
VALHALLA	USA
VALIANTS	USA
VALLEY RODENTS	GB
VALLEY WHEELS	USA
VANGANUI	NZ
VICEROYS	USA
VICTORS	USA
VIET NAM VETS	USA
VIGILANTES	USA
VIKING EXPLORERS	USA
VIKING NOMADS	GB / IRL
VIKINGS	USA / SWED
VIPERS	GFRM
VIRUS	GFRM
VULCANS	USA
VULTURES	GFRM

W

WALDSEF	GFRM
WANDERERS	USA / NZ
WAR ANGELS	GFRM
WAR LORDS	AUS / SA

W

WAR RATS	GFRM
WARLOCKS	USA
WARRIORS	USA (black) / GFRM
WEPERSOLLING	GFRM
WEST COAST NOMADS	USA
WESTERWALD	GFRM
WHFELMEN	USA
WHEELERS	USA
WHEELS	USA / GFRM
WHEELS OF MAN	USA
WHEELS OF PEACE	USA (black)
WHEELS OF SOUL	USA
WHEELS OF STEEL	GFRM
WHEELS OF TERROR	GFRM
WHEELS OF WONDER	USA
WHEELS UNLIMITED	USA
WHITE BIRDS	GFRM
WHITE SNAKES	GFRM
WHITE TRASH	USA / AUS / HAW
WIDOWMAKERS	USA
WILD ANGELS	USA / GFRM
WILD BUNCH	GFRM
WILD CHILDREN	USA
WILD EAGLES	GFRM
WILD FLASH	GFRM
WILD HORSES	GFRM
WILD LIFE	GFRM
WILD MONKS	GFRM
WILD ONES	CAN
WILD RABBITS	GFRM
WILD RIDERS	GFRM

W

WILD ROVERS	USA
WILD SKULLS	GERM
WILD STARS	GERM
WILD TAURUS	GERM
WILD WOLF	GERM
WILY WOLVES	SA
WIND JAMMERS	USA
WIND RIDERS	GERM
WIND TRAMPS	USA
WINGS OF FREEDOM	USA
WINGS OF ROAD	GERM
WIZARD STARS	GERM
WIZARDS	GERM
WODEN	GERM
WOLF MEN	GERM
WOLF OUTLAWS	GB
WOLF RUN	GERM
WOLFSSMONT	GERM
WORLD EAGLES	GERM
WORLD RIDERS	GERM
WOTAN'S SOHNE	GERM

Y

Y BRAWDOLAIFTH	GB
Y TWRCH TRWYTH	GB
YANKEES	GERM
YOUNG BLOOD	USA
YOUNG LIONS	USA

Z

ZERBERUS	GERM
ZINGARO'S	USA

Z

ZODIACS

USA (black)

7 STAIRS TO HELL

GERM

13 REBELS

USA

13 SINNERS

GERM

101 KNIGHTS

CAN

KEY:

AUS - AUSTRALIA; AUST - AUSTRIA; BELG - BELGIUM;

BRAZ - BRAZIL; CAN - CANADA; CIS - CHANNEL ISLANDS;

DEN - DENMARK; FR - FRANCE; GB - GREAT BRITAIN;

GERM - GERMANY; HAW - HAWAII; HOLL - HOLLAND; IRL - IRELAND;

IT - ITALY; LUX - LUXEMBURG; NOR - NORWAY; NZ - NEW ZEALAND;

SA - SOUTH AFRICA; SWED - SWEDEN; SWITZ - SWITZERLAND;

USA - UNITED STATES.

APPENDIX III

GLOSSARY OF BIKER TERMINOLOGY

A.B.A.T.E.	(U.S.) Association of Bikers Against Totalitarian Enactments. Bikers' rights organisation formed in the late 1960's to combat compulsory helmet laws. Large membership with national H.Q. and statewide chapters throughout the country.
Ace Cafe	(U.K.) Famous sixties ton-up caf' in North London.
A.F.F.A.	Angels Forever Forever Angels
A.M.A.	(U.S.) American Motorcycle Association. Governing body of motorcycle sport in the United States. Unwitting creator of the one-percenter label.
Angel	A full member of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club. Commonly used by the media to describe all outlaw motorcyclists.
Ape-hangers	Very high motorcycle handlebars.
Barger, Sonny	President of the Hells Angels M.C. Oakland California, and legendary spokesman for the club.
Bash	Party.
Beesa	colloq. for B.S.A.
B.E.T.	(U.S.) Biker Enforcement Team. Special

Federal undercover police squad formed to investigate the activities of prominent outlaw motorcycle clubs.

Biker-lifestyle	Popular American biker magazine.
Biker Rag	(U.S.) Motorcycle magazine.
Bkie.	(AUS) Media term for biker.
Bitch	(U.S.) Biker woman.
Bitch-pad	(U.S.) Motorcycle pillion seat.
Bitchin'	(U.S.) Great, terrific.
Blade	Knife.
Blow	Marijuana.
B.M.F.	(U.K.) British Motorcyclists' Federation. Large old established organisation catering for non-outlaw motorcyclists.
Bob-job	(U.S.) Early form of customised motorcycle.
Bonnie	colloq. for Triumph Bonneville motorcycle.
Brain bucket	Motorcycle safety helmet.
Brew	(U.S.) Beer.
Bro.	abbrev. Brother. Universal form of address within outlaw biker subculture.
B.R.O.	(N.Z.) Bikers Rights Organisation.
Back Street Heroes	(U.K.) Popular European biker magazine.
Buckhorns	Custom motorcycle handlebars.

Buck knife	Popular bikers' knife, worn in pouch on belt.
Burn out	Smoking the rear tyre whilst the motorcycle is at a standstill.
Burn up	Motorcycle race on public roads.
Buddy seat	Stock Harley-Davidson motorcycle seat.
Bust back	To return a full-patch motorcycle club member to prospect for having transgressed club rules.
Cafe racer	Style of custom motorcycle based on British racing machines of the Sixties.
Cage	(U.S.) Car.
Cager	(U.S.) Car driver.
Candy assed	(U.S.) derog. Flashy, over the top, effeminate.
Cat's eye	Popular custom motorcycle taillight.
Class	An indefinable quality setting a biker apart from his peers i.e. a biker with class, someone to be looked up to.
Chaps	(U.S.) Leather cowboy type garments designed to protect a motorcycle rider's legs.
Chapter	Individual branch of larger motorcycle club.
Charter	Certificate of incorporation awarded to motorcycle club upon successful completion of prospect period for larger club.

Charter club	Motorcycle club holding official charter of incorporation.
Cherry	(U.S.) Beautiful, pristine.
Chick	Woman.
Chicken run	Legendary, but largely fictitious contest in which two bikers would challenge each other's nerve by riding head on towards each other at speed, the first to turn aside being the loser. A variation on the same theme consisted of the riders daring each other to launch themselves across a major road junction as the traffic lights turned red against them. Both these practices were made much of by the media in the reporting of the activities of ton-up boys during the late Fifties and early Sixties, but there is little empirical evidence to support the theory that such behaviour was widespread amongst the subculture.
Chopper, chop	Hand built customised motorcycle much favoured amongst outlaw bikers.
Chopper jockey	(U.S.) Chopper rider.
Chopper pilot	(U.S.) As above.
Church	(U.K.) Motorcycle club meeting.
Citizen	(U.S.) Non-biker, anybody outside of the outlaw fraternity.
Clubhouse	H.Q. of motorcycle club.
Cold one	(U.S.) Iced beer.

Colours	The back patches worn by members of a particular outlaw motorcycle club.
Crank	Amphetamine sulphate, speed.
Crash, crash out	To go to sleep or pass out.
Cruising	Riding a custom motorcycle around town in the company of others so as to attract maximum public attention.
Cut-off	Leather or denim sleeveless jacket favoured by outlaw bikers for the display of club colours.
Cycle	pron. sickle (U.S.) Motorcycle.
Daytona	(U.S.) Premier American motorcycle racing venue which annually attracts thousands of outlaw bikers.
D.E.A.	(U.S.) Drug Enforcement Agency.
Death's head	Winged skull emblem of the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club.
D.F.F.L.	Dope Forever Forever Loaded. Outlaw front patch popular in the Sixties, but now seldom seen.
Digger	Particular style of custom motorcycle based on the design of the competition drag bike.
Dog	Unattractive woman.
Doobie	(U.S.) marijuana cigarette.
Dope	Marijuana.

Doughnut	(U.S.) Motorcycle made to skid in circle by application of front brake, i.e. turning a doughnut.
Doughnut	(U.K.) Biker who's 'gone soft' on a woman.
Drag pipes	Custom motorcycle exhaust pipes, usually unsilenced.
Dresser	(U.S.) Fully equipped touring motorcycle.
Easyriders	(U.S.) Largest selling motorcycle magazine in the world, catering specifically for the outlaw subculture.
Eighty	Eighty cubic inch Harley-Davidson (13400 c.c.)
Factory custom	Motorcycle manufactured by major Japanese company as mass production version of chopper. Bought largely by 'weekend bikers' seeking to assimilate the outlaw style. Frowned upon by outlaw bikers.
Fatbob	Particular style of custom motorcycle built to replicate the classic Harley-Davidson look.
Fed	(U.S.) Federal agent.
Fender	(U.S.) Mudguard.
Filthy Few	Said by law enforcement agencies in the United States to be an elite group within the ranks of the Hells Angels who are prepared to commit murder on behalf of the club. There is however no empirical evidence to support this allegation.

Fish tails	Custom upswept exhaust pipes with characteristic winged tips.
Flattie	corrup. Flathead. Sidevalve model Harley-Davidson.
Forty-Five	Forty-five cubic inch Harley-Davidson (750 c.c.)
Fox	(U.S.) Attractive biker woman.
F.T.W.	Fuck The World. Popular biker front patch.
Full patch member	Full member of outlaw motorcycle club.
Gang Bang	Media term for activity in which a female indulges in multiple sexual activity with members of an outlaw motorcycle club. Such occasions are much rarer than is popularly imagined, and rarely involve rape, the female in question being a willing participant. See 'Turn Out'.
Garbage wagon	(U.S.) derog. Term for factory production motorcycle.
Girders	Particular style of custom motorcycle forks.
Greaser, Grease, Greebo	(U.K.) Post-rocker era leather jacketted motorcyclist.
Hair drier	(U.K.) derog. Term applied by Rockers to Mods' motor scooters.
Hangaround	Would-be member of outlaw motorcycle club.
Hard-belly	Young girl.
Hardtail	Rigid custom motorcycle.

Highway pegs	Custom motorcycle footrests which give the rider a characteristic feet forward stance.
High side (going over the)	To crash spectacularly on a motorcycle. Usually resulting in death.
Hog	(U.S.) colloq. Harley-Davidson.
Hollister	American town lending its name to a famous incident which occurred in July 1947, giving rise to the A.M.A. 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ er statement, and forming the basis of the plot of the Marlon Brando film 'The Wild One'.
Hot dog rider	(U.S.) derog. Term for would-be outlaw biker who never quite makes the grade.
In the wind	(U.S.) Out on the highway aboard a motorcycle.
Iron Horse	Popular American biker magazine.
Jail bait	Underage girl.
Jamming	(U.S.) Riding.
Jay	Marijuana cigarette.
J.D.	(U.S.) abbrev. Jack Daniels. American bourbon very popular amongst bikers.
Jockey shift	Harley-Davidson hand gear change.
Johnson's	(U.K.) Famous Sixties ton-up caf' in Kent.
Jugs	(U.S.) Motorcycle cylinders.
Jugs	(U.S.) Female breasts.

Kent Custom Bike Show	(U.K.) Largest annual European outlaw biker event. Organised and run by the Hells Angels.
Knuckle, Knuck	corrup. Knucklehead, early model Harley-Davidson.
Laconia	(U.S.) Popular annual American biker gathering.
Line up	(U.K.) Term for activity in which a female indulges in multiple sexual activity with members of an outlaw motorcycle club. See 'Turn Out'.
Loner	Outlaw biker not attached to a specific motorcycle club.
Low-rider	Particular style of custom motorcycle.
M.A.G.	(U.K.) Motorcycle Action Group. Bikers' rights organisation formed in the early Seventies primarily to combat the introduction of compulsory helmet wearing.
Mama	Term used in the Sixties to describe a female who attached herself to an outlaw motorcycle club in order to indulge in sexual activity with the members in general as opposed to an 'old lady' who would be attached to one member alone. Nowadays the term is used more generally in the United States to describe any female closely involved with the outlaw motorcycle subculture, i.e. motorcycle 'mama'.

M.C.	Motorcycle Club.
Milk bar cowboy	(AUS/NZ) Leather jacketted motorcyclist of Fifties and Sixties. Equivalent of British 'ton-up boy'.
Milwaukee Mutha	Harley-Davidson.
M.M.A.	(U.S.) Modified Motorcycle Association. Nationwide bikers' rights organisation formed by the Hells Angels in the Seventies to promote the interests of chopper riders.
M.R.A.	(AUS) Motorcycle Riders Association. Bikers' rights organisation.
Muffler	(U.S.) Silencer.
Mutha	(U.S.) corrup. Mother fucker.
N.C.C.	(U.K.) National Chopper Club.
Ness, Arlen	(U.S.) World's foremost custom motorcycle builder.
Nomad	Outlaw biker not attached to a specific motorcycle club. Or bottom rocker worn by club member who travels around from chapter to chapter.
Nose candy	Cocaine.
Number	(U.S.) Marijuana cigarette.
Old Lady	Wife or established girlfriend of outlaw biker.
One-Percenter	Term arising from public statement of disassoc-

isation made by the A.M.A. in the wake of the Hollister troubles in 1947, to the effect that the miscreants were not members of their organisation which represented ninety-nine per cent of all law-abiding motorcyclists, and subsequently adopted as a badge of collective identity by outlaw bikers.

Originals

Term much beloved by the media to describe the denim outfit worn by an outlaw motorcyclist at his initiation, where it is desecrated by all present and subsequently never washed. Common in the Sixties, originals are rarely worn these days, and are generally considered to be passe within the outlaw subculture itself.

Outlaw

See 'One-Percenter'.

Over the high
side

Spectacular motorcycle accident usually resulting in death for the rider involved, who is said to have "gone over the high side".

Pad

Home.

Pan

corrup. Panhead. Early model Harley-Davidson.

Participate

To become involved in the activities of an outlaw motorcycle club.

Party

To have a good time.

Patches

'Colours' worn on the back of a 'cut-off' to denote the wearer's membership of a particular outlaw motorcycle club.

Pea-pad

(U.S.) Motorcycle pillion seat.

Piece	Gun.
Pig	Police Officer.
Powder	Amphetamine sulphate, speed.
Pres.	President, of outlaw motorcycle club.
Profile	To ride a custom motorcycle around town attracting public attention. See 'Cruising'.
Property patch	Patch worn by an outlaw biker's 'old lady' to show that she is the property of that particular biker/club i.e. 'PROPERTY OF LUKE - OUTLAWS'. Popular during the Sixties, but now generally considered passe within the subculture. Seldom worn these days.
Prospect	A prospective member of an outlaw motorcycle club who associates with the club for a set period of time until he is considered to be worthy of becoming a 'full patch member'. See 'Full patch member'. Prospects are only entitled to wear a 'bottom rocker' on their 'cut-offs'. See 'Bottom rocker'.
Prospect club	Outlaw motorcycle club prospecting for a charter from a larger club. See 'Charter'.
Prospect patch	Patch denoting status of wearer and club/charter of which he is a prospect.
Pull	Being stopped by the police - 'getting a pull'
Pull a train	See 'gang bang'.
Pullbacks	Custom motorcycle handlebars.

Pussy	(U.S.) Women.
Pussy whipped	(U.S.) derog. Pushed around by a woman.
Putt	(U.S.) Motorcycle.
Putting	(U.S.) Riding a motorcycle.
Rags	(U.K.) Northern term for 'patches'.
Ramp up	(U.K.) To illegally change the identification numbers of a stolen motorcycle.
Rat, rat bike	A custom motorcycle allowed to fall into a state of complete disrepair. Much pride is taken by the owners' of rat bikes as to how horrendous their particular machine can be.
Rice burner	(U.S.) derog. Japanese motorcycle.
Rice rocket	(U.S.) As above.
R.I.C.O.	(U.S.) Racketeering Influenced Criminal Organization. A Law introduced under the Nixon administration to curb the power of the Mafia, but used instead against the California Hells Angels during the late Seventies, resulting in the longest and most expensive trial in American history and the acquittal of all concerned. The R.I.C.O. Act has been used against outlaw motorcycle clubs since, usually unsuccessfully.
Ride to live, live to ride	A popular biker saying.

Righteous	Term of respect for biker of good standing - i.e. righteous biker, righteous chop, right- eous old lady etc.
Ring	To illegally change the identification number of a stolen motorcycle. See 'Ramp up'.
Ringer	Stolen motorcycle which has had its identif- ication numbers altered.
Roach	Filter of marijuana cigarette.
Roach clip	Clip for holding marijuana cigarette.
Road captain	Officer of an outlaw motorcycle club whose responsibility it is to organise and administer 'runs'.
Rocker	(U.K.) Sixties biker.
Rockers (top and bottom)	Patches worn on back by motorcycle club members showing their club name and place of origin.
Rug rats	Children.
Run	Occasion on which all members of an outlaw motorcycle club ride together to a set destination for a weekend party.
Salt Box	(U.K.) Famous Sixties ton-up caf' in South- East London.
Sec.	Secretary, of outlaw motorcycle club.
S.A.A.	Sergeant At Arms. Officer who keeps order in outlaw motorcycle club.

Seventy-Four	Seventy-four cubic inch Harley-Davidson (1200 c.c.)
Scooter, Scoot	(U.S.) Custom motorcycle.
Scooter tramp	(U.S.) Biker.
Sheep	Fictitious media term to describe female supposedly brought along by outlaw motor- cycle club prospect to his 'initiation ceremony' to be offered as a sexual favour to full patch members.
Shooter	Gun
Shotguns	Custom motorcycle exhaust pipes.
Shovel	abrev. Shovelhead. Late model Harley- Davidson.
Six-pack	(U.S.) Beer cans.
Skid Lid	Motorcycle safety helmet.
Skin up	To roll a marijuana cigarette.
Side-hack	(U.S.) Motorcycle and sidecar.
Sidewalk Commando	(U.S.) derog. Would-be outlaw biker. See 'Wannabe'.
Sissy bar	Custom motorcycle backrest.
Sleeze	(U.S.) Unattractive woman.
Snatch	Vagina.
Speed	Amphetamine Sulphate.

Sporty	corrup. Sportster. Late model Harley-Davidson.
Springers	Custom motorcycle forks.
Spunker	(U.K.) derog. Loose woman.
Stacks	High level custom motorcycle exhaust pipes.
Stash	Drugs.
Stock, Stocker	Standard production motorcycle.
Stomp	Beat Up.
Stomping	Collective fight.
Street sleeper	Very fast motorcycle deliberately disguised as stock machine.
Striker	(U.S.) 'Prospect' for outlaw motorcycle club. See 'Prospect'.
Strip	To forcibly remove colours from the back of a member of an enemy motorcycle club.
Stroker	Custom motorcycle with increased engine size.
Sturgis	(U.S.) Popular American annual biker gathering.
Subs	abbrev. Subscription, motorcycle club weekly dues.
Suds	(U.S.) Beer.
Sulph	abbrev. Amphetamine Sulphate.
Super Cycle	(U.S.) Popular American biker magazine.
Swap Meet	Gathering for the exchange of used motorcycle parts.

Sweat	(U.K.) Trouble - 'No sweat' - no trouble.
Sweat hog	(U.S.) derog. fat woman.
Tats	(U.S.) abbrev. tattoo.
Tin box	derog. car.
Toke	(U.S.) To smoke a marijuana cigarette.
Tombstone	Popular custom motorcycle taillight.
Ton-Up Boy	(U.K.) Leather-jacketted British motorcyclist of the late Fifties and early Sixties.
Toot	(U.S.) To take cocaine.
Tooled Up	(U.K.) Armed, carrying weapons.
Tramp	(U.S.) Outlaw biker.
Treas.	Treasurer, of outlaw motorcycle club.
Trike	Three-wheeled custom motorcycle.
Trumpet	colloq. Triumph.
Tug	(U.K.) Being stopped by the police - getting a tug.
Turn Out	Female who is willing participant in multiple sexual activity with members of an outlaw motorcycle club.
Up front	Outward going, honest.
Vice Pres.	Vice President, of outlaw motorcycle club.
Wally	(U.K.) Biker not a member of outlaw motorcycle club, idiot.

Wannabe	(U.S.) derog. corrup. want-to-be. Would-be
Wheels	Motorcycle.
Wheelie	To elevate the front wheel of a motorcycle at speed.
Wide Glide	Popular style of chopper.
Whizz	(U.K.) Amphetamine Sulphate, Speed.
Willy G.	Willy G. Davidson. Legendary and widely respected head of the Harley-Davidson Motor- cycle Company.
Wings	Largely fictitious patches worn on the front of an outlaw biker's cut-off to signify his participation in certain ritualistic sexual acts. Seldom worn these days.
Yahoo	To enjoy a good party.

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APPENDIX IV

GLOSSARY OF METROPOLITAN POLICE TERMS APPERTAINING TO HELLS ANGELS AND OTHER OUTLAW BIKERS. (LARGELY INCORRECT OR IMAGINERY)

GENERAL INFORMATION

CHAPTERS' FINES

A member can be fined for not having his wheels on the road for more than 30 days. He is demoted to Prospect. He can also be fined for not turning up at weekly meetings or annual runs etc.

LOANS

A member may loan money from Treasurer if his subs are fully paid up but has to return the money within one month with 25% interest. If not paid back demoted to Prospect. If still not paid back stomped until he pays up fully.

PROPERTY PATCHES

Old Ladys Colours (sic) comprise a Top Rocker saying 'Property' below that the word 'of' then below that the person's legal name to whom she belongs. Below that the name of the Chapter. Property patches do not have anything on front and are sewn on a levi sleeveless denim much the same as normal Angels.

MAMMAS (sic) PATCHES

These are much the same as Old Ladys but is says Property of Kent - Mamma (sic). The Mamma (sic) comes before any Old Lady. The Chapter charges a small fee to anybody who wants to borrow

her outside the Chapter. The money goes into the Chapter Funds. Presidents of other Chapters may shag her for nothing.

INIATE (sic)

When a Prospect becomes a full Angel he is urinated, spewed on and shit on

ANGEL'S PRAYER

"Yea though I walk through the valley of the shadow of Death, I will fear no evil, because we are the God Damned Evilest Bastards of them all".

FEMALE SIDE

The female side of 'Hells Angels' Chapters consists of either wives or girlfriends of male members. These females are called 'Old Ladies' or unattached females are called 'Mammas' (sic). The attached 'Old Ladies' are the exclusive property of their husbands or boyfriends whilst the 'Mammas' (sic) are the communal property of the whole Chapter.

ANGEL SAYINGS

Live for today for tomorrow may never come. It's better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven.

Don't alter your mind there's a fault in reality.

Revolution is the only way out.

I am you and you are me and we are Kent so K.F.F.K.

All on one and one on all.

Evil is the man that holds the key to another man's freedom.

VOCABULARY

A.F.F.A.	Angels forever, forever Angels. Often tattooed or worn on denims.
A.C.A.B.	All coppers are bastards.
A.F.F.L.	Angels forever, forever lasting.
Angel Kissing	Doing something disgusting in view of members of the public.
Amalgamation	The joining of two or more chapters.
Bangles	Hells Angels
B.F.F.B.	Brothers forever, forever brothers.
Bitch patch	Patch worn by girl showing she is the property of one Angel (girl has to live with Angel for one month to win patch).
Bread	Money
Brothers	Fellow Angels
Chapter	A group of Angels under one name with their own elected officers.
Crash out	To sleep the night in someone's house.
Chicks	The general term for a female.
Chopper	Motorcycle stripped of all standard parts then made to owner's liking.
Citizen or Pig Citizen	Person who is not a Hells Angel
Citizen Tag	True name of an Angel.

Colours	Angel regalia, usually the name of the Chapter and other insignia worn on denim jackets.
Crash out	To sleep rough
Crash	Go to sleep.
D.B.D.	Death before dishonour.
Deaths Head	Worn in the centre of back. Skull with headdress meaning many things. Main one Hells Angels are always close to death.
Ferry	Place where Angels live, derelict.
D.F.F.L.	Dope forever, forever loaded
Doughnuts	Two people with mutual feelings in a Chapter.
F.F.F.F.F.	Find, follow, finger, fuck, forget.
Filthy Few	The name of a celebrated American chapter.
Gang Bang	A number of Angels having sexual intercourse with a girl one after another.
Class	Anything out of the ordinary.
Good Crack	Party, good time, good thing.
Guys	Fellow Angels.
Hells Angels	This world is hell and we are the Angels on it.
Hog	Motorcycle.
Heat	Police.

Fuzz	Police.
K.F.F.K.	Kent forever, forever Kent.
Legal name	Nickname by which Angels are known amongst themselves.
Liberate	To liberate a chopper. To steal and make better use of.
Loose Patches	Badges worn on front of denims such as 1%, 13, etc.
Mammas (sic)	Females who associate with Angels, but not the property of one Angel.
M.C.	Motorcycle Club - attached to colours.
Mind Snapping	See Angel kissing.
Mother	Female housekeeper.
Old Woman, Old Lady	Female who is considered to be property of one particular Angel who often has the name of the Angel to whom she belongs emblazoned on her clothing.
On the same vibes	Understanding one another.
Originals	Clothing worn continually without ever having been washed.
Outlaw Chapters	Chapters who are not recognised therefore are usually stomped out and stripped.
Pad	House or flat.
Party	Meeting of Hells Angels.
Patch	Insignia worn on back by Hells Angels.

Plastic Man	Informer or scapegoat.
President	Leader of Chapter.
Prospect	Probationary Hells Angel. Person wishing to join Chapter becomes a prospect for three months. Prospect only wears bottom rocker.
Pulling the Train	The woman who is subject of a 'Gang Bang' is said to do this. Usually happens on most runs.
Nothings	Anyone not an Angel.
Righteous	To be righteous - to mind snap e.g. never wash
Rocker - Top	Part of colours - semi-circular saying Hells Angels.
Rocker - Bottom	Part of colours saying name of Chapter worn bottom of denims.
Rumble	Fight.
Run	All Angels from a Chapter going out together.
Screwing a wormhole	Sexual intercourse with a virgin.
Sergeant at Arms	Second in command of Chapter (Named because he has sole control of all offensive weapons carried by members. He is responsible for issue and collection of arms).
Squat	Place where Angels live, derelict.
Snuffed	To die, preferably on wheels.

Stomping	Punishment meted out by Angels on anyone who has offended them, usually consists of a severe kicking or a fight between two Chapters.
Stripping	To strip colours from anyone not entitled to wear them.
Tripping	Under the influence of drugs, sometimes described as being out of one's skull.
Training, Train Run, Turn Out	See under Gang Bang.
Treasurer	In charge of collecting subs, Money goes towards fines, bail etc.
Vice President	To see the President's orders are carried out without question.
Wally's (sic)	Greasers or guys trying to be plastic image Angels.
Wheels	Transportation, motor cycle, car.
Wheeley (sic)	Lifting the front wheels (sic) of motor cycle whilst riding.
Wollies (sic)	Persons who ride motor cycles but are not Hells Angels.
Zombie Pig	Principal officer in prison.
1%	Meaning 1% of all motor cyclists are Hells Angels.
13	Refers to the 13th letter of the alphabet.

the letter 'M', and indicates the wearer has
used the drug marijuana.

69

Head to tail sex.

666

Sex, Sin, Savagery

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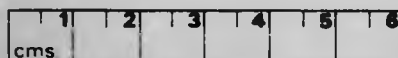
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